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The Two Standards

BY

WILLIAM BARRY

AUTHOR OF 'THE NEW ANTIGONE,' ETC.

Dans vos cieux, au delà de la sphère des nues.
Au fond de cet azur immobile et dormant,
Peut-être faites-vous des choses inconnues,
Où la douleur de l'homme entre comme élément.

VICTOR HUGO

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1898

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To the Memory

OF

TRAVERS THOMSON

AN INNOCENT GOLDSEEKER

WHO DIED IN SIGHT OF THE ANDES

AT PALMIRA, COLOMBIA

FEBRUARY 21ST, 1896

IN HIS TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR

Vivas in Pace, Anima Dulcissima

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BOOK I

ARIMASPIANS, OR THE GOLD SEEKERS

Thou flower-like maiden, thus, in rich array,
  Proud, fair and delicate, thou steppest down,
  Wearing about thy brows the bridal crown,
Thy garments trailing, as thou mov'st away,
Within the glass that image to survey
  Which smiles upon thee, nor hath any frown,
  But glorious beams, and in a golden gown
Gives back the splendour of thy laughing May.

Behold, this bridal is thine hour of doom!
  The gold is all aflame that round thee glows,
And of thy flesh devours the living bloom;
  Ah, now thou longest for those virgin snows,
That seemed to thee mere colours of the tomb;
  Alas, too late; in ashes falls thy rose!

EURIP. *Medea*, 1160.

The Two Standards

CHAPTER I

THE PICTURE OF A HUSBAND

MARIAN GREYSTOKE sat before the window in her room, writing in a square old book, vellum bound, with rusty brazen clasps. And this is how she was writing,—

'What a dismal Monday morning! Clouds of smoke hanging on the tree tops, loitering about those long strips of brown covert on the hillside, creeping and creeping down to the stream over the wet meadows! And into the dark windows of the church the rain is driving whenever a puff of air comes up the valley. In Rylsford Churchyard the very graves look gloomier, with their long couch grasses dishevelled (a good word, by-the-bye!) and their leaning stones smitten as with whips of storm. A dank, dreary church; its low lantern unlighted from within, unsunned from without; walls the colour of the gravestones with which it must have been built, bought at the auction of some other old church that was retiring from business. A prison of a church! And there is not one single ray anywhere—oh! not anywhere—to tell me the world is not a prison too, narrow as this Rylsford Valley, where the great stems rise up to heaven, and the branches moan, waiting for the spring—'

She looked up, curled her lip in a way not unknown

to her friends, between fun and earnest, and wrote again in her vellum book,—

'I am quite the person to be making these pretty schoolgirl remarks! What else have I to do? This is my cell in the Vicarage, and here I live. Live? Good heavens! How untidy the garden looks! but we have no gardener, and mother can't do everything. She tries hard, all the same. Mrs Greystoke, as Emmeline said in one of her cold fits of rage, likes to be thought of as the virtuous woman of the Bible. She certainly "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." The gates and fences are moss-grown touchwood; the queer old place itself, gables and all, will sink down one of these days by the churchyard, a heap of historic dust—unless father's ships come home. And they never will.

'No, they never will. Their sails would have to be made out of those dirty white rags on which the South Americans print their bonds and scrip and debentures — see how I know the names, taught me unwittingly by poor, dear father—promising to pay whole cargoes of gold, which they hide somewhere in Eldorado. *Eh bien, messieurs*, why don't you send them? It is very hard on Emmeline and Rosie and me. We are daughters of an English clergyman, oldest of old families, beautiful, accomplished—listen to Emmy playing, with an occasional false note, on the piano downstairs the "Wedding March" of Mendelssohn. Oh, Emmy, how you torment that poor, imprisoned Ariel, who "doth vent his groans as fast as mill wheels strike!" "What are you quoting?" asks mother, suspiciously. "Oh, nothing, mamma; only Shakespeare." "Shakespeare!" Fancy the look in her eyes when I say Shakespeare. But here we are, three penniless girls, with no more outlook than—let me find a comparison—than the flower-girls who sell buttonholes in Piccadilly. No more? Perhaps less. The flower-girls don't live in a convent down by a graveyard, their mother the austere abbess, to see they break none of the rules!

'I am tired of writing. Marian, my child, you remind me for the hundreth time of Jasmin. Look at that sketch found in your delightful loft, under which you have written, "In the Moated Grange."'

She pushed back the great leathern seat, opened the curtains behind her, and went to a tall chest in the room —a room hung in faded gilt cordovan, looking indescribably old and dim. Then she came to the window with a portrait in her hand, which she held up to the light.

'Surely there is some likeness,' she says or thinks; 'the face is oval, not round or long, like an English girl's, that cold mask, with its shining teeth. Oval, and so is mine. Hair as dark as a gipsy's; and what a colour in the eyes—violets under water! Like mine again. Didn't I overhear that unpleasant Mrs Henshaw call me an ugly, yellow cat, with pink eyes. Beautiful eyes, Mrs Henshaw! Jasmin must have been swarthy; I am the least fair of us three. Emmeline is dreadfully fair; I never saw her blush. Why will she go on with her "Wedding March" out of tune? Do you expect your rustic prince this morning that you thump so exasperatingly? Happy you to have a prince. You don't dream and dream about that intense life of pleasure and excitement which is, which must be, somewhere, but as hopelessly out of our reach as the moon hanging over us at night. How I long to eat the forbidden fruit. I do, mother; and I know I do. Is it my fault? Inside this weary parsonage all fruit is forbidden, if it seems pleasant to the eyes and to be desired. Am I a wicked girl, I wonder, or only a shabby Cinderella, waiting for the great enchantment that still delays?'

Some one was tramping along by the covert, coming down to the Vicarage gate. 'It is Cousin Charlie,' said Marian, looking out. 'Here he comes, striding over the stiles in his seven-leagued boots. He will spend the morning with Emmy, and the finest bars in his conversation will be bars of rest. Well, I can go into my garret; Colonel Louis Greystoke shall talk to me

about Jasmin, and tell me whether I am like that Fair Syrian. I prefer the Colonel dead to any Charlie Latimer living. Charlie is handsome, dull, proud and poor; he made nothing of his gold mine in Africa, after all.'

She stood for some minutes watching the rain. Then the curtain was pulled suddenly away from her elbow; and she started and cried out sharply, 'What do you mean? Who is there? Oh, Rosie, you naughty puss!' And then, changing to a tender key, 'No, no, dear, don't mind,' for the child was trembling that had thrust her yellow head in through the curtains, and could not speak. Her face was all flushed and eager, but the eyes looked a little furtive, with some habitual shyness in them.

Marian put her arms round the slender little body, not too well clad in its short Princess frock of serviceable, worn-out stuff. And Rosie laid her long curls on the elder girl's shoulder, nestling to her like a dove whose wings were still fluttering. 'I didn't mean to startle you, Marian,' she whispered; 'I was only playing. Cousin Charlie wants you.'

'Wants me? Nonsense! you mean Emmy.'

'No; you. He said so. He is downstairs, and he sent me up. I told him Emmy was in the schoolroom practising her scales.'

'Ah, if it were only scales—harmless, necessary scales,' said Marian, turning to the door. 'Rosie, you mustn't mock; it is not scales, but a wedding march.'

'Well, I thought it was scales,' answered Rosie, shaking her curls free; 'she began so often.'

'Where is mother?' They were going down the stairs now.

'Oh! in school; it is Monday morning, you know. And father's in his study.'

'Yes, always,' said Marian, with a sigh.

She entered the morning-room, which was dark and low-ceiled, like the rest of the house. No fire burnt on the hearth, but near it was standing, his long legs rather anxiously apart, as Marian observed—and she smiled at

the expression—Cousin Charlie Latimer. His boots and gaiters were muddy, and he wore a rough country suit; nevertheless, height and bearing, and delicate features set off with a golden-brown beard, gave him always the air of that 'rustic prince' who was to marry Emmeline. He turned, and they shook hands in silence. The strains of Mendelssohn came faintly borne to them from afar.

'Rosie said you asked for me'—it was Marian who began. Her cousin seemed more vacant than usual; he could not find his tongue. 'Hasn't she made a mistake? You want Emmy.'

'I want to talk with you, Marian,' he answered, swallowing the words, 'only give me time—if you don't mind. It is rather hard to say what—what I have been intending to say for a good many months. I'm afraid I shall make an awful mess of it. I know how stupid I am.'

He paused.

'Take your time, by all means, Cousin Charlie,' replied Marian, in a polite but not encouraging tone. 'And let us sit down meanwhile,' going to a chair at the window.

Charlie followed. 'Thank you, I won't sit down; I shall feel more stupid than ever,' said he, and he leaned against the dark walnut panelling which showed the profile of his fair face and head to much advantage. Marian was struck with his beauty, as he remained immovable, and also with the slow workings of his brain in the longish interval that ensued after his speech.

'Is it about Emmy?' she inquired again. 'We all know that you and she were intended for one another. She will be soon four-and-twenty.'

'Yes, yes, we were. And I never had any other thought. I like Emmeline. I was happy in looking forward to our marriage some day'—a plaintive chord sounded in the distance—'but there seemed no hurry—until, until—' He stopped in sheer embarrassment, then his face flushed to the temples.

Marian gave one quiet glance at him, and looked away; he must make his explanation without help of hers. She did but say calmly, 'So you have changed your mind, and the engagement is broken?'

'There was no engagement,' he replied eagerly. 'I have never spoken to her as if we were engaged. She might marry where she pleased, and I—'

'But if she were pleased to marry *you*, Cousin Charlie,' interrupting him.

'I always thought it would come to that,' he replied helplessly, and a sudden crescendo movement in the wedding music sounded full in the room, jubilant, caressing. 'I always had the greatest regard—'

'Had, Charlie?'

'Well, have, then,' in a tone of desperation. 'My father's wishes, after he was taken so suddenly, seemed to me more sacred than ever. He told me that he wished it; and so did I until I came back from South Africa. We could have married then. But I—I did not know what love meant.' The piano ceased.

'Do you now?' she asked absently, playing with the fringe of a tassel.

'Yes, Marian, I do. I do, indeed. There is no mistake about it.' He gave up his attitude by the wall, and came and stood near her. A fine colour was on his cheek, and his eyes sparkled. The music began softly again.

'Well, I daresay it is an interesting experience,' said the lady. 'And since you are not in love with Emmy, you ought to think twice before proposing to her.'

'Think twice!' he broke out. 'How can you be so cruel? I am not going to propose to her. It was not for that I came.'

'For what, then, if I must ask?'

His eyes settled on the faded carpet as if he were reading his lesson there, and he made the great plunge.

'For you,' he said boldly. Yes, he did look every inch a Viking, a pirate turned farmer, but still the hero from the sea. 'I worship the ground you walk on, and I ask you to be my wife.' It was done, and

well done. Marian looked at him admiringly, and then gave him her hand.

'You are not at all stupid,' she said, with a kind of regal assumption which became her well. But when he would have put her hand to his lips she drew it back. 'No, no, Cousin Charlie, I have heard you; now it is my turn. You are a fine fellow, but I cannot be your wife.'

'Oh, why not?' he gasped. And still that detestable "March" was about him like an incantation of demons. Would it never stop? *Her* thoughts took a sudden flight into the worlds which imagination painted, and where he had never been a traveller. He felt that a thick cloud was falling between them. Now she remained silent. She was listening to her dead ancestor, Colonel Louis Greystoke, as he told the story of Jasmin the Fair Syrian.

At last she rose and said dreamily, 'That is over. You know neither yourself nor me. Marry Emmeline. I shall not tell her.' The music echoed, 'Marry, marry, Emmeline.'

'I will never marry the woman I do not love,' he said fiercely, for his blood was up. 'When you come into the room, Marian, it is like wine to me, like a hot sun in my eyes. It intoxicates, it thrills me. I go home and dream of it.'

'Yes, that must be love,' she thought, but would not say. 'You ought to feel like that for Emmy,' she answered aloud. 'Wait,' as he was beginning again impatiently. 'She expects it; and she will be miserably disappointed. If you must hurt her feelings, wait until this fancy fair is over at Mintern, or you will set the country talking. We shall all be there together. As for me, I will keep your confidence; it would be frightful if Emmeline were jealous of her sister.'

They were at the door, and he must go. But he would utter his last word. 'Remember, Marian, there is no other woman in the world for me, and I mean to marry you yet. By God, I do.'

Ah, well, who knows?' she said lightly, and went

upstairs. The crash of a grand finale pursued them both; it was a whirlwind of music that would not be appeased, and Charlie Latimer fled before it. As he was crossing the last stile into the fields, Mrs Greystoke came from the village. She recognised his retreating form, and wondered why he had been calling so early. She must inquire.

In the hall she met Rosie, her favourite child, passionately loved, and loving her in turn, but as one loves the high, severe landscape on which the sunshine itself seems cold. Rosie did not babble and run on like a stream of talk with Mrs Greystoke, although with Marian she could prattle by the hour. The story was soon told. Cousin Charlie had asked for Malkin, and Malkin and he had sat a long while in the morning-room, and he had gone without seeing papa or Emmy.

The virtuous woman's foot was on the stairs when she heard this strange story, and her firm step told Marian, who had gone up to her own room, that a tempest was approaching. How could Charlie Latimer have been so indiscreet? What a selfish thing is a man's love! she thought to herself, as she waited, with her eyes fixed on the door, resolved to keep her promise, although dreading her mother's tenacious curiosity. She did not want Emmeline to be frantic and the house in confusion. However, a promise was a promise. Nothing should move her from that vantage ground.

'Your things are wet, mother,' she said when Mrs Greystoke appeared. 'Can I help you to take them off?'

Her mother's eye measured the girl from head to foot, who was standing quietly as if nothing had happened. She brushed aside the flimsy diversion; and came straight to the point. 'What did Charlie Latimer want with you just now?' said she.

Marian had no reply to make, and a certain stillness in her manner boded resistance. She offered a singular contrast to Mrs Greystoke, not in one feature only, or in another, but complete as if they belonged to different creations. Both wore black as mourning for an uncle

who had left neither his nieces nor his sister anything except a few old-fashioned jewels, the price of which had bought the women new frocks to mourn him in four months ago. But while Mrs Greystoke's draperies seemed out of keeping with her florid complexion and somewhat stout figure, those which Marian wore fell about her in gracious undulations, and gave her brilliant dark eyes and southern tints a charming, because unobtrusive, relief. There was a touch of the commonplace in Rachel Greystoke; she should have been pale, not florid. Marian had that distinction which comes of beauty unknown or despised by those who see it every day, yet aware of itself without being vain. Some other qualities, too, had entered in, as perfumes cast into flame. She had long been alone in her thoughts. Now she was passing out of them upon a new stage. And the first to try conclusions with her was, perhaps, the most formidable. She must walk warily.

'Have you nothing to tell your mother?' said the dangerous low voice. 'Why did your cousin walk from Saxby on such a morning in mud and rain?'

'Really, mother, I cannot tell you. Cousin Charlie's movements do not signify to me.'

'But they signify to me. I insist on knowing—Rosie said you were together quite a long time in the morning-room.'

Marian looked at her mother, and a sharp gleam came into her eyes. 'Rosie ought not to be encouraged in tittle-tattle, mother; it is an Evangelical bad habit. She has been reading too many stories of conversion—Ellen Montgomery's, and all that.'

'Marian!' The grey eyes were blazing with passion, which made itself felt in the slightly tremulous voice. 'Marian, a naughty person walketh with a froward mouth. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house.'

'Mine do, at all events. I wish they didn't. I have thought sometimes I would run away. But why do you throw the Bible at me so often, mother? It is a strange way of making me a Christian.'

'A Christian? Ah, my poor child; that, I fear, you will never be. But come, tell me your cousin's business with you.'

The girl walked slowly to her little shelf of books, and seemed busy in searching for a volume. 'I must ask you to excuse me, mother,' she said, without turning round. 'I am of an age to keep my own counsel, and I intend to do so.'

Mrs Greystoke, who had been on her feet during this passage of artillery, put her hand on the door. 'You are a perverse girl,' she cried hotly; 'your father shall hear of this. Stay in your room until I send for you. It is not fit you should sit at a Christian table while this spirit is on you.'

She was almost outside the room when Marian came forward. 'Wait a moment, mother,' she said, in tones quite poised and clear, though she could feel her heart beating violently. 'Let father know, by all means. But you are going to treat me again as you have done before—to lock me in and leave me to my own bitter thoughts. You treat me like a child, say I am no Christian, and act the tyrant over me. Why should I wish to be a Christian? Judging by those I know, it is not a delightful condition. Shall I tell you the truth? I *have* thought of running away from this house, and I daresay I shall. I despise your religious cant; and I hate, yes, I hate Rylsford.'

There was something beneath the fire of these words, vehement as was their accent, which not only startled but awed Mrs Greystoke. She made an effort to beat down the rising mutiny. 'You hate your home,' she said in icy tones; 'perhaps you will say next that you hate me.'

Their eyes met in a singular exchange of feelings. 'Don't tempt me, mother,' whispered the girl. She was at the end of her patience; a flame seemed to cross the air of the room and strike into her brain. 'Go! go!' she exclaimed desperately.

Mrs Greystoke passed out and locked the door. Her faulty instinct again misled the poor woman, who

did not mean to be unjust or cruel—she was simply without understanding in a difficult moment—and she could not guess that Marian might be waiting for a kind word. The inveterate habit of treating a girl of twenty like a child was too strong to be resisted, when the key which she had so often turned before was in her hand.

'The foolish virgins were shut out, but I am shut in,' said Marian to herself, with a bitter smile, as she heard the grating sound. 'Was ever such a ridiculous situation? It is mother's fine genius; nothing else would have been equal to it. Just because I am trying to hinder unpleasant talk, and to save Emmy the loss of a husband! Emmy, Cousin Charlie and mother—what a world to live in! I must get away from it or go out of my mind. Which shall it be?'

She fell into her vein of thinking again; and now the cloudy prospect in front of the window was not present to eyes or imagination. Another girl might have shed tears, but Marian's temper seldom turned to April. Her blood seemed to be pulsing more quickly; and her forehead, as she leaned it on her hand, was burning. That was all. Alone, she felt quite alone. Past years came about her in a throng, everyone with its tale of endurance, fancies and foiled hopes. What could she do to break a way through the enchanted hedge? Before the key turned again in the lock she must decide.

CHAPTER II

MAMMON, GREATEST GOD BELOW THE SKY

WE feel for the ugly duckling in Hans Andersen's immortal story; but our pity is tempered by the knowledge that one day he will grow a pair of glorious wings and soar upward into the spaces of the blue, where his fellows are floating on outspread pinions. What, however, if we could not tell whether the great wings were destined to sprout? if it depended on the other ducklings, which were neither ugly nor uncommon, to allow their perplexing mate a free course, or to keep him awkward and discontented in the muddy pool at the farmer's door? And what if the suspected uncompanionable creature had a presentiment as dim as it was importunate of the snowy wings and the swan-music which ought to be his, yet were like an idle dream, waking every night, to be scattered and laughed at in the day-time by the sceptical quacking which went on all round the pool? Would our pity be less?

Marian Greystoke was such an ugly duckling. She was all that she fancied, and more. The passionate character, at odds with the little world of Rylsford, had only begun to display itself; and its capability of inflicting pain, or enduring it, was almost latent. She was perverse, wilful, obstinate and proud. She rebelled against circumstances. She vexed her own heart. The white wings—she was always in imagination spreading them. The swan's song—she tried over its inarticulate music day by day, in her diary, which was a volume of hopes, laments, protests, castles in the air, an unfinished romance of her own life, to which she could not discover

or invent a *dénoûment*. She sketched her face from the looking-glass, and tried to read her fortune in its lines. But the admirable beauty, the dark, bright eyes, told her no more than if they had been a stranger's. Underneath that other drawing, which, as she thought, resembled her, she had scribbled 'Mariana in the Moated Grange,' and flung it away in her desk. The wings would not grow; the song died in her throat.

There was, to be sure, the farmer's pond in which she might dabble about muddily with the rest; and the monotonous quacking went on without cessation—a comfort, it would seem, to the waddling brood, for they never tired of it. But the blue spaces, and the waters shining like silver, and the clanging with her mate to the highest spheres, the horizon flying before them as they went, the seas and the great continents shifting in a lovely panorama, how far away, how impossible and unreal! For now a swan's wings are the price of gold, and those delights after which Marian longed are the special inheritance of Indian pheasants and other carefully-tended fowl, or rather not those but their supposed equivalent, to be got behind wire fences, with man-servants and maid-servants in continual attendance, and the finest corn heaped up in china bowls to be devoured at stated intervals. The wild swan has yielded before the tame pheasant, which costs sixty guineas a pair and will eat out of your hand.

Marian, however, was shut away from the preserve as from the reedy marsh and the free heavens. To be happy, she knew, you must be rich; and her people were poor. Once, long ago, she remembered when Rylsford Vicarage was the picture of that most comfortable and most English-looking of homes—a well-kept parsonage. In those days her father had some twelve hundred a year. The lawn was trim, and, like a dowager's velvet, thick piled; the flower-beds glowed with colour; the vineries and pineries, though not larger than became the clerical moderation, had a name far and wide. Marian still regretted the pair of brown shelties which had been appropriated to her and Emmeline, and were as docile

as caged pets, though no cage was needed for them, and they went in and out pretty much as they pleased between paddock and stable. She remembered, too, the delight of childhood in new dresses, changing colours, and piles of toys and ornaments as pretty as they were expensive. She remembered journeys to the seaside in coquettish travelling costumes, and visits to country houses where other children showed her their frocks and their picture books; though here memory interposed that the grown-up people were often, or mostly, of a stern and doleful countenance; that there had been much Bible-reading, with cold dinners and no games, on Sunday, which word in their language appeared to be something wicked, for she was corrected in speaking of it and cautioned to say 'Sabbath,' or even, by one old gentleman with a queer, thin accent, 'the blessed Sabbath.' She remembered liking Mrs Raby's house better than any, severe though it was, and Mrs Raby herself, a gaunt, silent woman. But it was Elizabeth Raby that made the memory of Oakland Cottage pleasant. And now Elizabeth—ah! she was an ugly duckling, too; but she had grown her wings and taken to flight. Mrs Greystoke could not hear her mentioned without a shudder.

Let us come back to the story of the Greystoke downfall. It was not in the least inevitable. It need not have been, had the Rev. Harold Greystoke believed, as every Sabbath he declared that he did, in the parables which he so eloquently commented upon from the great brown volume lying on the velvet cushion before him. The Reverend Harold was what is called a good man. That is to say, negatively, that he neither drank to excess nor uttered unseemly words, nor went to horse races. And of course he did not steal, and had never been in a police court, except on the bench. And, positively, he was a good man, as having a certain languid desire that everyone around him should be comfortable; and, if it were not so troublesome, he would have done something—his share, whatever it was—to make them so. But who knew what his share might

amount to? At any rate, he would do them no harm. This, surely, it is to be a good man. If only Mr Greystoke had put more faith in those parables! For he had one, just one, passion. He speculated.

Was it gambling? His wife abhorred gambling. So did he. Cards Mrs Greystoke never touched, for she had been brought up in the straitest sect of her religion, an Evangelical. 'Cards,' she said, 'were the Devil's playthings.' In which she was, doubtless, well-warranted. But her husband, though he did not play for money in his wife's presence, had no rooted objection to cutting in at whist if she were not likely to hear of it. Still, he played for sixpences only, and was merely a trifle in or out of pocket at the close of the evening. His excuse to himself was that, coming of a High Church family, cards were to him a tradition and almost a part of the Jacobite creed for which his ancestors had fought and suffered. Mrs Greystoke, however, would hardly have condoned the weakness; for was not every species of gambling forbidden?

Every species, my dear madam? Why then—? But we are beginning at the wrong end. It is quite true that Mr Greystoke ruined himself by endeavouring to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market, as political economists counselled him; and stocks and shares are goods, or commodities, like anything else, if there is property behind them. But he would probably never have gone into that particular market if he had looked on himself as a wealthy man. Is twelve hundred a-year wealth? He said no; Mrs Greystoke said no; public opinion said no. What did the great brown volume in the pulpit say? The Vicar never thought of consulting it; for it was, in fact, a Sunday book, and on Sundays he preached and put away the thought of money.

Harold was an only son, and when his father, a small country squire, died he left him no more than two hundred and fifty pounds a-year, in the shape of rents from farmlands. But this, with his Vicarage, enabled him to marry Rachel Latimer, descended remotely

from the famous bishop and martyr, and thus entitled to look down on all whose ancestors' virtues or vices were not blazoned in history. She brought into the family of Greystoke the severest religious views and a fortune which, as in the case of another clergyman's wife—but we know Mrs Elton simply from a doubtful narrative, perhaps fictitious—might always be spoken of as 'ten thousand pounds.' Why did she accept Harold? For his soul's sake, she declared to herself; she wished him to be saved, and would gladly be the instrument of Higher Powers in the process. And, in fact, not many weeks before their wedding-day, the young clergyman, who had been charged with the cure of eight hundred souls for nearly three years, did profess to have found salvation, on a sultry afternoon, at a quarter past five by the drawing-room clock, after an hour's wrestling in prayer conducted by the Reverend Silas Huthwaite. He was no less sincere in making that statement than in any other transaction of his life. But then, as his best friends remarked, Greystoke was 'fearfully indolent,' and it is probable that he would have subscribed, at Rachel's bidding, to the Westminster Confession, were she minded to enforce it, rather than argue the point with her.

No doubt that pious woman contrasted her own activity with his good-looking repose, and felt the charm. We all display this unconscious irony in regard to our favourite pursuits. With a husband made of sterner stuff, there would have been less scope for Mrs Greystoke in the parish of Rylsford. She liked to consider herself the 'bishop of those without'; and her time would have sped happily but for the weakness, or craze, or mania which, beginning in trifles, gradually took possession of her converted but still idle husband.

Mr Greystoke, though averse from sowing, was eager enough to reap; and he was encouraged to thrust his sickle into the harvest by a series of most alluring circulars, which every morning lay awaiting him when he came down to breakfast. There they were, borne as on wings from every quarter of the known world,

assuring him that it was all a Tom Tiddler's ground, on which he might pick up gold and silver for the stooping. From tin mines in Cornwall to gold mines in Mysore and Arizona; from new methods of hypnotising or refrigerating live calves for importation from New Zealand to improved methods of lining coffins; from plans for raising the chariots of the Egyptians which had been drowned in the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his pursuing hosts to plans for patenting the steerage of balloons in war time;—plans for making transmarine bridges of brown paper blocks; plans for pouring oil on troubled waters and stilling the waves by means of a battalion of Florence flasks attached to Atlantic steamers; lotteries, dignified with the name of science, and promising dividends of at least thirty-five per cent., —they were all before him where to choose. And, at first timidly, and then more and more adventurously, Harold chose.

He corresponded by every post with 'outside dealers.' He studied the stock and share list with a diligence that would have made him an admirable Hebrew and Greek scholar if he had bestowed as much attention on the Bible, which he was commissioned to expound, as on the rise and fall of the market. But quite another kind of 'commission' was running in his head. He had never set a shilling on a horse, and he was an indifferent hand at whist. But not even Mrs Greystoke could pretend that to combine a high interest with good security partook of the nature of gambling. It was mere prudence, incumbent on a father whose children were brought up too well to think of earning their livelihood. So the Vicar shut himself into his library, where good old-fashioned tomes were sleeping on the shelves, and there day by day he indulged his passion. It was before the era of syndicates, else he would have gambled away his last ten pounds. His wife's fortune had been absolutely at her disposal. Like a good mother, she was persuaded to risk a little, and then a little more, on behalf of the children, who were to profit by the astonishing dividends prophesied of in

the pages of these modern Daniels. She lost notably, —of course, after many ups and downs in the game of chance, twenty-five pounds won yesterday and thirty filched away this morning. But nothing is easier than to throw good money after bad; and nothing harder than to pull up on the edge of the steep. When Marian was fifteen the crash came.

Her father's two hundred and fifty a-year from the land, as well as three-fourths of Mrs Greystoke's fortune, were swept away in the high tide of a crisis. They were in debt already; the glebe land brought in a good deal less than Crockford had assigned to it; tithes—it is hardly requisite to pursue the sad story. The Greystokes awoke one morning and found themselves reduced to a state not unlike beggary. It was a terrible reverse. Their carriage had to be 'laid down'; the two eldest girls were brought home from school; the annual holiday at the seaside or Harrogate was given up; retrenchments had to be practised at table, and by the children and their mother in the milliner's bill; and instead of the comfort and abundance which had given the Vicarage its agreeable air, there came over the place a look of abandonment, almost of desolation. It is astonishing how soon a house begins to tell tales of those who live in it. Mrs Greystoke bore her sorrows with admirable fortitude. She was a good housewife, had her multifarious meddlings in the parish not taken her so often from home, and she put a brave face on misfortune. But the lawn, the garden-walks, the outhouses were neglected. The furniture within, excellent in its heavy kind, grew shabbier with every season; there was a lack of attendance where only two rough country servants could be kept; and the Vicar's profound melancholy, deepened by Mrs Greystoke's pious resignation to the will of Providence, did not add to the cheerfulness of their abode.

When Harold had a five-pound note, he was still tempted to risk it in copper; when he had none, he moved vacantly round in his accustomed beat, never say-

ing much, and more and more declining from spiritual topics to parish talk concerning the crops, the weather, last Tuesday's run with the hounds, the poaching affray near Tipplington, and the likelihood of Heathcote Hall finding a tenant this next shooting season. The squire, Mr De la Beche, whom Mr Greystoke had never set eyes on, was an absentee of some twenty years' standing, whose favourite haunt was Cairo or Monte Carlo during the cold months, and the Pyrenees in summer. He was reputed to be an extremely wealthy old man, unmarried, and addicted, like the clergyman himself, to games of hazard, but on a considerably larger scale and in more luxurious surroundings. It was known just now that the Hall would shortly receive a fresh tenant, whose coming was eagerly expected—Mr Harland, late member for Brancepeth—a man of ample means and high reputation. He was a bachelor; and Miss Harland, his sister, was to preside over the establishment.

But what difference could this make to the unlucky Greystoke girls, who so seldom went anywhere that the day which they hoped for at the bazaar in Mintern would be an event for them? How could they appear in society? They were poorer than the poorest in their own reckoning. Of the necessaries of life—meaning thereby bread and meat and cheese, a bed to lie on, and a fairly watertight roof—they had perhaps sufficient. But the superfluous, which is the essential—above all things to a woman? The tags and laces and fripperies, the golden coach and the glass slipper? Alas! they were a company of Cinderellas without a fairy god-mother. No magic wand had they to change at a stroke the mice running about their American cheese into a pair of long-tailed bays, or the rat sitting on their barrel of small beer into a red-coated, periwigged coachman, to drive them to the prince's ball. They sat at home on each side of the dying kitchen fire, and glared at one another; while Mrs Greystoke scolded the farm labourers' wives into outward conformity with her doctrines, and the Vicar

smoked and slept, and said little or nothing. It was a miserable household, doomed to bitter and unoccupied days by genteel poverty and legalised gambling.

But Marian was the most to be pitied. Emmeline, who had no bad qualities, if stupidity be not such (and I have heard serious persons call it the root of all evil), could exist in comfort where her more lively sister must have died. And then, was there not for Emmy the hope of future independence, whenever it should please Charlie Latimer to declare himself? He had not a deal of money, but his farm was his own, and there would be no mother-in-law to divide the kingdom. She, therefore, might afford to wait. Marian, on the other hand, was without hope. She had always followed her own bent, though it cost her whippings and bread and water and solitary confinement when she was a little girl, and banishment to that odious school at Limbeck when she had grown beyond whippings. Yet Limbeck had its compensations, of which by-and-by.

Her mind was all alive, her fancy quick; her moral training left, perhaps, something to be desired. For want of teachers, was it? Her father preached well-written sermons—Mrs Greystoke looked them over, from the doctrinal point of view, on the Saturday—in their low-browed, whitewashed old church; two discourses every Sunday, since he had been compelled to lay down his curate as well as his carriage. They were good sentences and well pronounced. But his second daughter would have despised him for pronouncing them, had she not felt that he was bound to get his living, and there was no other way.

Thus she sat or stood in the high-backed pew—Mrs Greystoke resisted the open bench system as savouring of Popery—and while the indolent, musical voice floated round her, she would contrast that obscure country church and its somnolent congregation, rustic heads nodding towards one another, with all she had read and dreamed and longed for in the universe outside. Surely there was something better than this

droning and moaning among the tombs of the dead. Life could not be so dull and clammy as the air of Rylsford Church seemed to tell her it was. The sun was shining somewhere, if one could but get thither. Did not books and newspapers talk of great cities—had she not herself stayed once in London—where millions of men and women were struggling for existence, and, therefore, all the more alive; of fleets of merchantmen crossing the ocean; of armies on the march, with banners flying and trumpets sounding, to the battle-fields of the world? Were there not courts and palaces, circles of illustrious men, of beautiful and celebrated women, of artists, poets, actresses, who swept across Europe like blazing stars, all glow and renown? Did not human beings do and dare splendidly—away, away from the underground cavern in which she was wasting as one already dead? These psalms, these prayers said nothing religious to her, any more than if they were muttered in an unknown tongue. Her father spoke of Heaven in the pulpit as though it were the desire of his heart to get there. But did he want to get there? Did he believe in it? She thought not; it was all gesture and make-believe. He wanted to speculate in mining shares and be successful; he was sad because he had lost his money. Quite right. What else should he be? Money would purchase that high, well-filled existence from which the want of it shut them out. And her mother had the same ambition. But as often as Marian thought of her mother, the girl's face darkened. She felt with fierce conviction that to her mother she was indebted for the chief part of her unhappiness.

CHAPTER III

ALORS JE SONGE ET ME SOUVIENS

IN this edifying humour, Miss Marian, not venturing to absent herself from the church services, would sit and inwardly comment on her father's homilies, or forget that she was under a sacred roof, and let her thoughts wander east and west in search of the unattainable, till the dropping of her prayer-book on the floor admonished her to be more careful of appearances. When church was over and the day fine, she had a way of slipping out into the paddock at the back of the Vicarage, a large open field with tall hedges round it, and now untenanted since the ponies had been sold. There, walking to and fro behind the hawthorn screen, she would read or muse, glad to have escaped from the intolerable social silence which pervaded the house on Sundays. Her book was never of a religious character, I regret to say. She read much poetry, but held in about equal abhorrence *The Christian Year*, which at Limbeck went by the name of *The Sunday Puzzle*, and gentle Dr Bickersteth's Miltonic epos, *Yesterday, To-Day and For Ever*. She also read novels, not English, indeed, but French, having taught herself the latter language with some vague notion that one day it might serve her in the great world to which she intended to belong. The accent, which she could not learn from books, was fortunately attainable at Limbeck, thanks to her dear old friend, Lizzie Raby, who had been brought up in Touraine, and spoke French with remarkable purity. For two years, indeed, Miss Raby had given lessons in French at Limbeck.

It will not, however, be imagined that Mrs Greystoke

was acquainted with her daughter's course of studies, or imprisonment on bread and water would have been the consequence. Marian, rummaging in odd corners, had found, one wet November day, several chests of mouldering volumes in a loft which only she or the housemaid was wont to enter. They had belonged to her father's grandfather, who had French blood in his veins; nay, he was French by birth, and had migrated to England in the dreadful year 1794. Being especially fond of eighteenth century memoirs, travels and dissertations *sur les mœurs*, such as were once in fashion, he left behind him a large collection which Harold brought with him to Rylsford. Mrs Greystoke, on entering the Vicarage, saw them with an evil eye. She did not open them; she knew they were not of a kind to interest her; but, judging them to be ungodly and works of darkness, she felt a scruple in selling them to the Midianites, even for gold of Ophir. As the Vicar at once shared her scruples when they were mentioned to him, the whole cargo of French vanity was laid away in the garret; and, unless the rats and the spiders perused it, as torn pages and rotting covers testified, it gave offence to no one, until this young lady, in quest of adventures and amusement, lifted the lids of the boxes and saw what they contained.

She had been sufficiently drilled in the history of France to have heard some of the names; and she began her innocent studies with a volume of Madame de Sévigné. It was not very amusing, she thought. Then she dipped her hand in again, and fished out some pages, well gnawed in places by the rats, belonging to a masculine writer, M. de Saint Simon, *duc et pair de France*. An odd story caught her eye; she sat down on a dusty square of carpet which happened to be lying near, and was soon deep in the Tacitean record on which she had lighted. It was exceedingly unlike anything she had ever read; least of all did it resemble her father's sermons; but she said to herself, 'I am sure this is true. Life must be like this outside.' At the cost of much grubbing in the dust and dirt, she brought up the

volume of which these leaves were a portion, and went on reading, reading, with the vividest sense of reality, as if hitherto she had been playing a part in some lifeless drama, a third-rate farcical comedy, and, tap, at the stroke of a wand, she was transported to a glorious city, where the streets were thronged, and the king's palace was of crystal, so that you could see all that went on within. The world was alive again of which these passionate intrigues, rivalries, duellings, court splendours, huntings and maskings had formed a part. The queens and the duchesses, the maids of honour and the King's favourites came forth gay and smiling, or in tragic despair, and told her of the feelings which had set them in a flame and were now consuming them to ashes. Versailles, with its grace and its wickedness, its trim alleys, and marble statues, and artificial lakes and dainty flower-beds; with its mirrored halls, and quaint, old-world dresses, rose before her like a vision, and filled the dusty lumber-room with light and revelry.

It was a revelation, though hardly from on high. Her starved fancy gloated over the Rubens-like colour and richness, at once so warm and so mundane, which made a background for the ten thousand personages that came and went, uttering their keen sentences, exchanging stately courtesies, abounding in falsehood of speech, but showing by the way they staked their existence on a cast how sincerely they believed that pleasure is pleasant. Marian from that moment believed it too. It had always been her creed, as she felt; but she had not seen or known a world in which it was the ruling power. She did not think of drawing a contrast, however; she was absorbed in what she read. They came, I say, those ghosts out of a dead past; they were as beautiful, as fascinating as when they lived and breathed; their light, airy touch, their consistent viciousness, their gay renunciation of the ideals men preach about and, as Marian said, pretend to look up to, was it not thrilling, intoxicating? To be steeped in the pleasure of doing what one liked, and, when that was denied, to face death smiling! There were crimes, there was blood in the

story; there were broken hearts, poisons, jealousies, secret lyings in wait, murders and midnight plottings. But why not, if life could have no seasoning without them? They redeemed the frivolity, they enhanced the grand style which furnished the velvet trappings of that golden armour. There must be death to heighten life, like a flaming poison administered in the wine-cup. But Marian was conscious of the life without being able to fathom the wickedness. She did not want the wickedness, but the pleasure. So she sat and sat, till darkness looked in at the cobwebbed window of the garret. Then, taking the dusty book, and carefully shutting the lid against which she had been leaning, she went down to her own room, where she hid her treasure-trove in a drawer; and while doing so was called to tea, after which her mother gave her a basket of children's socks to finish for the Christmas charity, bestowed, with leaflets appropriate to the season, by that indefatigable lady on her village clients.

Marian knitted the socks and kept her thoughts to herself, but they too went on in a sort of mental weaving which threw up a strangely fascinating picture as it proceeded. She listened in silence to the evening hymn accompanied on the harmonium by Emmeline. Hymn-singing and occasional exposition were marked features of the Greystoke household. Both her parents had rich, deep voices; and it was because Emmeline alone had not inherited their musical ear that she was made to practise so incessantly. For music they properly considered as an indispensable part of every young lady's education. She thought so herself, poor girl! and underwent as well as inflicted a martyrdom in the vain hope of gaining by diligence—by persevering, prayerful effort, as her mother counselled—that accuracy of notation and delicate touch that for its own reasons Nature had denied her. Marian, in whom a splendid musical talent lay hidden, disliked the religious exercises at which her sister toiled, and preferred to have no dealings with the village choir. She practised music at her own times and seasons. But to-night, while the melancholy lilt of the

hymn went forward, she discerned in it a kinship—far off, no doubt, and, so to speak, deformed and almost a caricature—to that intense life of which she had been reading in the garret. There was the same longing to be set free from commonplace; the echo of passion, feeble enough as it was here rendered, but a passion which once had throbbed in words and music; there was the same secret desire to be intoxicated with the unknown. While the impression lasted, Marian could fancy how some people, like her mother, perhaps, took pleasure in being religious. It was their dissipation, though a poor sort of one—their escape out of prison into the blue air. Who was it that talked of religion as 'a window opened on the Infinite?' It might be so in Mrs Greystoke's case. 'But what a small window, and how many bars across it!' said the girl to herself, as she went up to bed. Her light should have been out at half-past ten. It was burning at midnight; and the room where she slept was thronged with courtiers and high-rouged dames from Marly and Fontainebleau. She was holding a reception, looking at the lovely phantoms with the aid of her printed incantation, and watching their gaieties with a kindling eye.

What is it that has died which cannot be brought to life again? Here was a cemetery of a house, with the father mourning over his flown ducats, and the mother singing psalms; and into the very midst of it, through chinks and crannies, must come with their splendid vices, their plushes and silks, their laced coats and point of Valenciennes, with their powdered hair and corrupt hearts, and sharp-edged swords, dyed in too frequent gouts of scarlet, the whole sinful company which we may suppose to have dined *en petit comité* with Beelzebub ever so long ago. Talk of raising the devil! Who says it is impossible? Who calls it an effete superstition? It is the easiest thing in the world. If this young girl had gone to the mightiest necromancer that ever lived, and persuaded him to utter his most powerful spells, he could not so effectually have put her in communication with the spirits of the dead as those two or three old

volumes. The very heart of that lawless time was laid before her. She entered into it; she made it her own. Henceforth her thoughts had a definite colour, her purpose in life, could she get an opening out of the narrow crevice into which, like a toad in sandstone, she had been shut up, was determined.

Next day, and the day after, she returned stealthily to the forsaken loft, which, in its gloom and dust and silence, held her 'sweet, uplocked treasure'; and there she feasted on Saint Simon. That she did not always understand either his allusions to the events of the time, or his fierce and deadly criticism, touched with Jansenist gall and dipped in wormwood, of the men and women he painted, made to his present reader no difference. It was all a part of the secret she had begun to find absorbing. Then she searched the shelves, boxes, desks and every hiding-place in the long, narrow room, with its stumpy wooden pillars dividing it into so many little shops and warehouses of mystery, hoping to light upon fresh marvels, she knew not what; only that seeing faded portraits tied about with ribbon, bits of lovely old china, broken but still glorious in their colouring, a ruined harpsichord, packs of illustrated cards blackened with age and smut, some quaint children's toys, a baby's cradle lined in crimson silk, panels that seemed to be side scenes of a theatre, piles and piles of letters flung carelessly in heaps on one another, and miniatures in ivory broken or tarnished—the most mournful of mementos, for they had on them yet some ghost of a pair of eyes, the outline of a cheek, or the vivid spot that once was a girl's lip—seeing this dead bazaar in which beauty, love, wit, learning, passion had taken refuge, whereunto no purchaser came from the world of men, she felt that adventures must be in store for any one who would tumble over that lost world again. She was not disappointed. One morning—never could she forget the day, the hour, the minute, the arrow of yellow sunlight that pierced through a certain pane and made a track in the dusty atmosphere—amid the lumber and the letters, she fished up a parcel of brown

manuscript, written in French. At any moment after she could have recalled the very sensation of weight or resistance in the arm with which she pulled out the leaves which made so heavy a bundle. They were wrapped in a piece of crimson brocade, having at the edges a torn silver fringe and minute pearls inwrought here and there, and when she opened it the faint smell of musk was given out. A slight examination convinced Marian that now indeed she had come upon a prize.

It was a sort of *Journal de Voyage*, traveller's tales, or reminiscences and reflections, put together by the legendary ancestor, Louis Greystoke, whose name was seldom mentioned, but always with a mixture of shame and pride, in that house. Her mother called him 'the renegade,' or, 'your great-grandfather, Louis the Papist, who turned Mahometan'; and in genial moments Mr Greystoke would tell Marian that she was as unregenerate as 'that Turk,' and that she ought to be tied up with his turban. How, or when, or why he became a Turk, on what provocation, or in hope of what reward, these imperfect anathemas did not explain. Nevertheless, a memory so startling and unhallowed lay like an immense cloud of purple far off on the horizon, lighting up her sombre skies with a colour as of blood or deep crimson flame. The renegade Louis seemed a figure at once romantic and lugubrious to Marian—such in fact was the impression he made upon her, although she did not analyse it into these epithets, which at that time found no place among her scanty store of words. But a Greystoke, who had fallen down at the feet of the Roman witch-wife where she sat on her scarlet-coloured beast and held out her golden cup, full of abominations yet surely intoxicating, had the dreadful charm which lurks in every tale of uncommon sin, of pacts with the demon, and forbidden daring that spares not holy things. And the other cup, out of which, not content with mystic Babylon, he had quaffed and grown drunken —the strange Eastern faith so curiously mingled in with prophecy and the last days; with the time, times, and

half a time about which Mrs Greystoke's friends had such copious information; with the two witnesses clothed in sackcloth, and all the dark pictures in which St John's Revelation abounded, as in subterranean or volcanic fires throwing up their ruddy lights out of an abyss—what must the man have been who dared to take it to his lips? Was he as handsome and agreeable as he was manifestly bold? She had often wished to know; but in the Vicarage, hitherto, she had never come across a portrait of this Louis. And why Louis again? It was not one of the Greystoke names. But Marian, however inquisitive, faltered after two or three ineffectual attempts to lead her mother on into telling what she knew of the old story. As soon as the girl began her questions, Mrs Greystoke, whose equivalent for the novels she did not read was the newest Apocalyptic literature, and who at one time hoped to convert Marian by frightening her with the tribulation speedily coming upon earth and the end of all things at hand, launched out into this ocean without compass or steering gear. She was a strong Millenarian, and in better days had subscribed to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews. Marian felt that she never should learn much about General Louis—he was a soldier, and she liked to think of him in splendid uniform, with a jewelled sword on his thigh—never much, I say, from these lectures on the pouring out of the seven vials and the image of the beast. So she asked no more; and when the Millenium was started downstairs, she would find it was now her time to practise on the piano which Emmeline had been putting out of tune.

Such was the overture, skilfully composed but never intended, to the performance that Marian evoked on her lonely stage, the forsaken garret, in the morning when she undid the bundle of brocade. Louis himself would tell the long-wished-for story, and not in Rachel Greystoke's fashion. He wrote a fine, clear hand; there would be little trouble in following him. And so the play began. To measure its influence, however, on the

audience of one whom the Colonel had at last acquired, we must take into account the circumstances of this young girl's training. Marian had never danced, nor seen the inside of a theatre, nor even strolled through a picture gallery. In their high and palmy days the Greystokes lived a colourless sort of life, eschewing frivolities—which are the world's device for teaching where serious lessons fail—and visiting only among their sober acquaintance. Of all the arts, except music, antimacassers and water-colour drawing, their children were meant to be profoundly ignorant. And they were. Not that Marian had seen no other paintings than the sketches given her to copy at school—the leaning cottages, with bluish-green mosses bitten into their unwholesome thatch, the slanting dovecotes and fallen trees lying across chalky-looking streams with sedges growing in them—but in Rylsford Vicarage were to be found only landscapes of a darkness which might be felt, encircled by heavy old gilt frames; and at Limbeck she tried not to see the devout skeletons which had emerged on its walls from the studio of Cornelius and his bloodless disciples. In the houses where she had sometimes stayed with her parents she remembered no colour at all, unless the red of the window-curtains and the sanguine roses of the flock-paper in the dining-rooms. Serious people looked upon existence as a study in black and white, a line-engraving without meretricious tints and Pagan splendours; they did not even cultivate the cheerful arabesques in which Mahometans, who will refuse to draw the human figure, excel; and when colour invaded their homes it had neither delicacy nor significance. But, by the most singular chance in the world, for this, too, there was compensation. As how? Marry, as thus, sir—

It happened on a Sunday afternoon that the Vicar's wife—whom a saucy choir-boy had once called the Vicar-general, thanks to her incessant perambulations of the parish—not seeing Marian, had gone in search of her. She was discerned, after a while, walking in the

paddock behind her favourite hedge, with a book in her hand; but this volume, on her mother's quick step sounding near, she put out of sight.

'Marian, what are you reading this Sabbath afternoon?' demanded Mrs Greystoke, in the peremptory but pious accent which her daughter always knew as denoting a grievance.

'Reading? Oh! a book,' answered the girl.

'What book?' was the stern question. 'Let me see it. Are you ashamed, that you hold it behind your back?'

'Not—not exactly,' faltered Marian, giving up the guilty volume, on which her mother's talons came down with the pounce of a hawk. It lay in her grasp, black and conspicuous. It was the Bible.

Between vexation and perplexity, Mrs Greystoke felt more angry than ever. She had been infamously mocked. Was Marian laughing at her—at the sacred book itself? Looking intently on the girl's face, and taking her by the wrist, she exclaimed, 'My child, in what spirit were you handling this blessed word of the Lord? Is it possible that you love your Bible?'

Marian smiled a little scornfully; then she became serious and answered, 'Yes, mother, I do love my Bible; and I came here to read it quietly. I am always reading it; but you haven't noticed.'

'Cherish it, cherish it, my child,' said the good woman, and she went on her way rejoicing.

'Always reading it,' said Marian. That was a little beyond the mark; but we are now speaking of early days in her development; and it was true that she did spend hours over the Bible, and knew many chapters by heart, and saw its pages in the visions of the night. The Bible was teaching her more than Mrs Greystoke dreamed—whether in accordance with the dismal commentary which her religion furnished to its all-subduing text is a different question. But certainly Marian loved it.

She had come to love it by degrees, in snatches—a sentence now and again, a half word, a story, a de-

scription, two or three verses in a psalm, or the headline of a prophecy—as we make out meanings in a language we have taken up by ourselves, or find our way into high-wrought musical passages that allure, humble, cast down by the beauty of which we seize glimpses in them. And, strange to say, it was the indolent Vicar that helped Marian along this pathway.

Mr Greystoke read the lessons with an intonation so large and well-balanced, so sweet and searching, or so convincingly profound, that while he was giving them out, Marian sat as in the hearing of a mighty orchestra. No less — for the exquisite *vox humana* was borne up, was quickened and thrown into a flame by the words themselves, which sang with him in their ancient beauty, and struck their golden chords in unison, and sometimes danced as if the stars in their courses turned about a steadfast sun ; and again wept most feelingly, and fell into the minor, and sank down one by one, dying as if from very sweetness and the pain of an intense desire. Such a treasure was laid up in this earthen vessel ! When the Vicar preached, his voice, caressing or smooth, had not these accents ; but a sentence of Holy Writ occurring in his sermon would wake them once more ; and Marian watched for the quotations that made music in his uninspired though scholarly prose.

She was, perhaps, the one living soul on whom this remarkable power did its office of illumination. The voice brought out the colours, and the colours gave a meaning to the message. Always in colours it was that Marian interpreted what she heard. The boundless universe unrolled itself from these pages to the sound of various changing instruments, a vivid spectacle set to the grandest harmonies; it asked her to contemplate all that was therein, to travel and be acquainted with its secrets, to know the men and women who played part after part as the ages moved along, and to choose from them such as she admired, hated, aspired to be. And always on the scale of colour. So these lessons,

which were almost the whole of the service she attended to in church, abode in her memory as 'the very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice.'

Hence she gloried in the Old Testament and the Revelation of St John, seeing at first only a confused richness, as it were a cloud, the outline of which was weaving and unweaving itself continually, or as a chequer of light and shade on the water beneath willow branches stirred by the wind, until the cloud grew more fixed, the branches stayed their motion, and cities, gardens, tents, palaces, camps, groves and the burning wilderness came forth to view, and over the scene passed many a strange figure, most unlike in its bearing and costume to the phantoms of the living she perceived round about her. *These* were not phantoms; they spoke straight to Marian's heart.

Before she attained this clairvoyance, however, which made her fancy populous with a world of symbols, she had learnt to wander through certain books, as, for example, Exodus, and the chapters of Kings or Chronicles, with all a child's insatiable and amused curiosity, eyes wide open, hands stretched out to grasp with every sense the glorious household furniture of the tabernacle and the Holy of Holies, which produced on her the same effect of riches past counting that she might have felt hereafter in a bazaar at Cairo or Constantinople. It was the profusion of still life, patiently described in a divine inventory, that left her astonished; and her only regret, when she went over the stores of beautiful twined linens in blue and purple and scarlet, the wrought garments and decorations of stones of price assigned to the Levitical priesthood, was that in those charming adornments no woman appeared to have any share. That, perhaps, was *naïveté* in Marian; but her whole reading of the Bible was *naïve*, perfectly fresh and untouched by the droning lessons of the Sabbath school, where she dreamt, gave wrong answers, was scolded, and seemed the veriest dunce in the class. No one could ever give Miss Marian a certificate for answering conundrums set by

skilful examiners in this sacred theme. Her Bible was not knowledge, but romance, exploration, inquiry; she could not get it up; she merely took it into her substance and made it part of herself, by an instinct which told her how this thing was to be done.

First, then, a palace of varieties, where she found no end to the lovely array, and was always taking in new delight—pleased with the landscape and the sky, so different from ours by the intense radiance which somehow streamed from the words as she went on reading them; and yet more taken when all this became a background to stories that, with a rare but refined sense, she liked best not to finish or be rounded in a ring, but to hang mysteriously melting into darkness, high above in the clouds. This feeling worked as a chemical test on the infinite materials; and the result was peculiar. It may be questioned if any other drew from the Bible a picture such as in course of years accompanied Marian's thoughts by night and by day, serving as a *repertoire* from which, whenever the fit came, she selected the drama and the persons she wanted to put on her mental stage.

What she longed after was the mystery in things—to feel that behind the half-open door stood One she had never seen, One whom to see clearly might freeze her very marrow and kill her outright—nevertheless she would please herself with guessing at those formidable lineaments. She did not mind the definitely drawn; it had no power to frighten, and in a religious sense nothing was at this time capable of edifying the girl. She apprehended much with eyes, heart, brain; with the conscience not a syllable of all her parents were saying or singing; and her father's elocution merely awakened wonder, and the joy of the artist in fine workmanship; but the rest of its meaning was silence. She passed by Joseph in Egypt, Ruth in the alien corn, and whosoever else was presented for edification in her Sunday school reading. They were made to have a purpose; and she saw Mrs Greystoke's firm and dimpled fingers busy on the strings. Besides,

they stood out clear; one could know all about them; the story was finished. And 'I don't care about that Ruth,' she said to Emmeline; 'I know if she was in the class she would be mother's favourite.' Emmeline liked her for marrying Boaz. But Marian turned her gaze in another direction, where the light fell in a clear-obscure, tormented with flying storms, or itself a gleam on the very point of vanishing; and such gleams flashed across her vision with ever new entrancement. Yet even they fell into an irregular and fitful procession as she looked on them repeatedly. She began to marshal them into a romance that had a thousand episodes and more halting places than Israel in the desert; but it was, at least, of one prevailing tone, and to a doctor of the spirit who should come across Marian—but none did just then—it would have furnished the means of diagnosis better than all his instruments.

When she had discovered how to amuse herself with a diary, which soothed, or excited, or laughed at her little weaknesses, and was the looking-glass she held up to her innermost thoughts, she wrote of these *dramatis personæ* in a page wherefrom I may copy a sentence or two.

'Dreams and dreams,' said Marian to her book, 'my beautiful dreams! They all come out of the Bible. I had taught myself some innocent witchcraft, and I could call up the dead from Sheol, and make them pass before me, in those days. I see them now as they stand to be looked at; it was a long, long time before I could get them to look at me. Each of them rose up, as it were, suddenly, breaking the darkness in two and thrusting it to the right and the left like a curtain; and their faces were turned always as if going into it again. I saw them in profile, or three-quarters, never full; thus they seemed to warn me, "We are not of thy upper world, we come from the shades and go down thither again; behold us while we vanish." I called them a second time and a third; never did I see more than this thin slab of light on which they

stood in their relief; and how tantalising it was that the solid darkness hid them as swiftly almost as they broke out from it! I longed to speak with them: what was the rest of their story? . . . The strange women! I saw Lamech's wives, Adah and Zillah, weeping over the young man he had slain to his hurt, avenging himself seventy and seven fold. Did they understand why their husband was so fierce? What was that young man to them? I saw Pharaoh's daughter walking with her maidens by the brimming waters of the Nile; above them was a dome of sapphire, and the River of Egypt ran by, blue as the heavens. She wore a golden fillet, binding the blackest hair I had ever set eyes on; and a straight robe, white as snow, fell to her ankles, on which I saw circlets of gold. Behind her went a Nubian damsel, carved ebony, holding up a parasol, which I dreamt was a peacock's tail outspread. She smiled graciously; I could have loved such a princess. Did she rejoice in the Hebrew child? Surely, since "he became her son." But she died and knew nothing of his after greatness. . . .

'It never was the Israelitish women I conjured up to me. But Zipporah, the Midianite, wife of Moses, her I beheld, when the storm of lightning wrapt that caravanserai by night, and the Power threatened her, and she took the sharp knife of stone to her children, and cried out on the blood wherewith it was tainted. And Rahab, the harlot, her I knew by the scarlet line round her throat, which it seemed to me that a sword had drawn. And Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, a woman of the desert, wild and treacherous, as she put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer, and went softly and knelt by the sleeping Sisera, and smote him through the forehead in her tent. So he died. As she lifted her face from the dead body, I saw in her eyes, glaring round, the look as of some cowardly, untamed creature, and I turned away. And the mother of Sisera cried through a lattice that very moment, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"

With her eyes, too, did I witness the battle, the victory, the division of the prey, "to every man a damsel or two, and a necklace of divers colours for his neck." Then Jael laughed aloud, and the timbrels and the dance accompanying Deborah's song took up her high note. And darkness swallowed them. . . .

'David, the shepherd lad, was my hero. Not so David the King. Him I thought selfish, sated with glory and pleasure. Else why did he take that one ewe lamb, when he had thousands on the hillsides? I used to wonder if Solomon, the wise little lad, ever dared to ask his mother, Queen Bathsheba, whether she knew what became of her first husband? Noble Uriah! When David's own son plotted against him, and stole the hearts of the men of Israel, I clapped my hands with delight. Absalom was the "bonnie Prince Charlie of the North Countree." That is not my saying; I should never have thought of it; but my father, whose fathers were Jacobites, told it me once, and I see it is true. The Ephraimites went mad about Absalom and his long yellow hair; he was their darling. A bit crafty, a bit cowardly. Away goes his mule out of the battle, and he is riding through the wood, his locks streaming behind; I know the thick branches will catch him in a minute, and there he hangs, his fair hair tangled in the oak, his eyes starting, his lips wide apart in anguish. And thou, Joab, comest with thy armour-bearers, insolent lads, and thy darts are in the breast of the King's son, and they strike him to make sure. "Oh! Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee! Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!" I cannot see the old King, but I hear his cry through the darkness. Will it ever fall silent while the world lasts? . . .

'"To the chief musician upon Shoshanim," which is, being interpreted, "the air of the lilies," "for the sons of Korah, Maschil, a song of loves." How dearly I like father to read me these words; the softest breezes come from Lebanon as he recites, "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." This was King

Solomon the Peaceful, in the day when he brought the daughter of Egypt to "the house of the forest," and the choir sang their triumphant bridal; or so I choose to imagine it. Was the lady at all jealous of the Queen of Sheba? Perhaps the Queen's visit happened in some earlier springtide, for these are her perfumes. "She came to Jerusalem with a very great train"—what a swelling and expectant prelude!—"with camels that bore spices, and very much gold, and precious stones. . . . There came no more such abundance of spices as these, which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon." Arabian perfumes, cosmetics, paint for the eyes and the cheeks, as it is written concerning that other lovely prince, the Prince of Tyrus, "The merchants of Sheba and Raahmah they were *thy* merchants; they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones and gold." How Jerusalem was stirred at her coming! Yet we may say, "The half is not told us!" Nothing but a single page, a picture that is hung up in the Books of Kings, and copied in every line by the Books of Chronicles! I make out this queen of gums and spices to have appeared in Jerusalem small, dark, yellow, with a sharp tongue, and eyes that go through you, and the daintiest of steps, as though she were walking over glass; and she wears the greenest of green cymars, with a girdle of the stones of fire; and on her fist she is carrying some strange, unknown bird, that cries in her ear, as if he were teaching her fresh riddles to put to the wisest of kings. . . .

'Wise? He must have been wise, with his three thousand proverbs and his knowledge of all trees, from the hyssop to the cedar of Lebanon. But who knows the meaning of that Song which is Solomon's? I had a fancy at one time that if we could break it up, and throw it into scenes as a musical play, not the King but some country lover would be the hero of it. The King —might not that be so in those Eastern lands?—saw the Shulamite, and fell in love, and took her up to Court; and she escaped, and was found by the watchers, but they in compassion let her go. Then the northern

laddie, who was searching distractedly everywhere, caught sight of his maiden, and together they fled to the mountains. The Shulamite was no daughter of the kings of Egypt, and she despised the perfumed imprisonment of the harem. . . . Did I think all that out by myself, or not until—until? Who can remember how thoughts grow upon one? It is harmless enough, anyhow; and a better moral, perhaps, than I like. Mother says that the Song means—ah, what use in troubling myself with mother's meanings? Has she ever looked on at this procession of which I know every step, every turn, and vesture, and colour? . . .'

There was more. But so much may suffice to prepare for the impression which General Greystoke's narrative made on his descendant, when she came to read it and its life entered into hers.

CHAPTER IV

THOU DRUNKEN—NOT WITH WINE

GENERAL GREYSTOKE began his reminiscences, which were written in the beautiful old court hand of the last century—every letter well-shaped and the whole a picture—with a headline in some language unknown to Marian, which ran thus:—

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

And, as she guessed, he went on to render the same in European letters—*Bismillah alrahman alrahim*—but she did not understand that this was a sacred formula, found outside her own religious traditions, or that its meaning was, 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.' Knowing as much, the girl would have been in some sort prepared for what followed. 'Was it Turkish, that queer-looking stuff?' she asked herself. But her eyes ran eagerly on to the opening paragraph. The General, in his polite and courtly French, addressed his son, '*Monsieur, mon fils,*' saying to him,—

'I know not, my child, *mon enfant,* whether it will ever come to you to read these lines. You have been compelled to quit your dear father and take refuge in England, among those wolves or leopards—faith, I don't dare to name them in such a day as this except with compliments—but from whom you and I are certainly descended. And here, in my own *Château,* Les Adrets, which I purchased on my return from the East, I am a prisoner, awaiting the good pleasure of Messieurs les Jacques Bonshommes, who will probably shorten me by

a head. That shall be as God pleases, not as they please. Meanwhile I desire that you should learn something of other ancestors whose blood is running in your veins, besides the leopards and the wolves—the Peace be upon them! You ought to be acquainted, at least, with these branches of your family stem; and if also, in the course of instruction, with a little of your old father's philosophy—well, so much the better. I give these pages to Adrienne; she will deliver them to you.'

Hereupon the old man made a solemn beginning. 'Your father, my dear boy, was named at the font—and his christening took place in Versailles, 3d May 1736—Louis Reginald de la Mothe le Vayer de Greystoke; his god-parent Louis XV., King of France and Navarre, being represented by M. le Duc de Vaudricour, and giving the child his own precious and well-beloved name of Louis. He, the charming deity of all French hearts at that time—he was just six-and-twenty and beautiful as an angel, I am told, very unlike the frightful old man I remember in 1773—could not have foreseen that his little Louis would call himself by-and-by the Hadji Hussein, and exchange the rococo splendours of Versailles for the marbles, gold and entablatures of the mosque of Meshid Ali. These things the All-Knowing hideth from men's eyes, and He doeth well. Do you ask how I came to be christened in the royal town of the kings of France? I will tell you.'

The story continued, in a few vivid touches, to narrate how Louis was the youngest born and only surviving son of Reginald Greystoke, Esquire, who inherited by a descent of six hundred years and more, Curras Castle, in Northumberland, with the estate thereunto belonging. Reginald, an orphan bereft of both parents, a chivalrous and headstrong lad of two-and-twenty, had flung himself, in the troubled year, 1715, into that desperate enterprise which Lord Derwentwater led to ruin, whilst it led him, Lord Nithsdale, and many another, to the block. Among these was not Reginald; but he lay in the Tower during several months; was rudely handled, it is said, by his cousin Marmaduke of the

same name, who contrived to get the keeping of him on mercenary conditions; suffered fierce indignities when endeavouring to escape from the underground rooms at Curras; and did, in spite of King, gaoler and cousin, get away at last unscathed to the Court of the Old Pretender. It was a miserable mockery of a Court. Reginald, handsome enough, fond of excitement, ambitious, and not wanting in wit, as he overflowed with courage, made his escape a second time. He presented himself to the Regent Orleans, and found in him such a master as he had been looking for. He detested the new England of the Georges; what more advisable than to fling away all he might have in common with the scoundrel Marmaduke, now in settled possession of Curras? To join the Gallican Church was a bold step, even for a Jacobite. Nevertheless Reginald took that step, and in doing so had his reward; he became the husband of Demoiselle Valentine la Mothe le Vayer, near akin to the saintly Archbishop of Cambray, Fénelon, who had died in a cloud of glory.

Just before his marriage the young man was made captain in the Black Musketeers, who belonged to the Maison du Roi; and though his first years were spent in joy and jollity, during the short Bacchanalian interlude which ended in 1723 with the death of the Regent, he saw plenty of hard service, off and on, in the next quarter of a century. In the Lombard campaigns of the French against the Imperialists, M. de Greystoke fought under old Marshal Villars, who had taken the field when now past eighty; and he followed the changing fortunes of the Duc de Broglie, in 1734, at Parma, La Secchia and Guastalla—the first and last great victories, La Secchia the wildest of flights after midnight—gaining, as the device of the Mérodes has it, '*Plus d'honneur que d'honneurs.*' Wedded life, and the sweet, innocent prattle of his children, had softened Reginald's heart. He was no longer the gilded youth, dissolute and pleasure-loving, who had shared the boy-king's childish and not very edifying amusements in the twenties. He drew back a little from Louis; and Louis, the coldest

of friends, did not seek to keep Greystoke by his side. The Englishman was a born soldier; not so the Well-Beloved, whose marchings and paradings had even less of the true campaigner in them than those of his great-grandfather, Louis Quatorze.

And so Colonel Greystoke went on, sword in hand, to the conquest of renown, but not of land or dollars, even in the disastrous day of Dettingen, at which furious combat his kinsman by marriage, young Fénelon, was badly wounded. The Black Musketeers fought like demons, rushing down in a whirlwind upon the Hanoverian English, but to no purpose; that battle, too, was won by the leopards. At Fontenoy, two years after, Greystoke had the supreme happiness of meeting, face to face, in the thick of the *mêlée* which tore and rent the English ranks, his cousin Marmaduke, and, as Providence gave him the chance, he followed it up, slashing his false cousin across the forehead and scattering his brains. At the same instant he received a sword-stroke across his own shoulder—most unluckily, as he thought, for it prevented him from joining Charles Edward in the autumn and making that descent on Scotland which went joyously staggering forward to Culloden. Other troubles came upon him thick and fast. His children died in a sad succession, all but Louis. And, in 1747, his wife, whom he adored, was thrown from her horse out riding, and she too was taken from his sight. A year passed; his shoulder gave him a good deal of pain at times; and catching a chill on a hunting expedition in the Jura, he had finally succumbed, a stranger in a strange land. Louis was then in his twelfth year. What would happen to the poor lad, a desolate orphan, whose father's kinsfolk hated him, while his mother's might not be disposed to forget that he was one of those sea-dogs, always a terror to the greatness of France?

The King, his godfather, had no money to give him, but he could name Louis Greystoke to St Cyr when he was old enough; and a military career seemed to be predestined for one whose ancestors had fought much more than they had ever studied. 'Yes, I was of course

a soldier by Heaven's grace,' wrote the veteran; 'but from the earliest I remember, something besides soldiering stirred in me. Call to mind, my dear Harold, the fairy tale of the man who understood the language of bird and beast as he walked through the woods. I was that man. I had an ear as quick as a wild animal's. I caught and mimicked every sound. I was on the look-out for the oddities of every man, woman and child I came across; and I mimicked them too. How often I got the strap for my pains! But I couldn't help it; I was made to mock, and imitate, and do as I saw others doing. To twist my little tunic about until it was a gipsy's cloak; to pull my hat down over my eyes like M. le Curé as he went riding along on his *bidet* to the next village; to make a nightcap of my scarf and tease grandma La Mothe when she found me behind the back of her chair doing "the old lady asleep"; and a thousand other monkey tricks, for which Allah forgive me in the day of account! There was neither tone, gesture, attitude nor expression that I could not give back to the life; and the temptation, or rather the instinct, was irresistible.'

Marian laughed outright when she came to the end of this description. She knew someone else that mocked and imitated; she could feel the smart in her shoulders yet, which was the penalty of such 'monkey tricks.' And here was the genealogy of them! But her ancestor continued,—

'Those gipsies, encamped at Moulin l'Evêque, led me into mischief. They told me that I was a gipsy too; they could see it in my eyes, which had the peculiar light of the Romany expression—it is only the ignorant common people who have made us call them Bohemians. I met them far out in Khorasan, where no Bohemian had ever set foot. Gipsy, however, I do not believe that I am. But I chattered their vile jargon as fast as a magpie; they taught me their signs; and I am afraid I often helped them to our fat capons and our good old Beaujolais. I disliked the men—cowardly thieves and incorrigible liars. The girls were not so

bad. But I was much too young to fall in love with any of them.'

At St Cyr, Louis says, he learned the dead languages —taught as if they had never been alive; and, as that was not his way of mastering a dialect, he hated them ever after. But he went on teaching himself every kind of *patois*, the slang of all the people he met, in all their trades; and, by-and-by, the German, Italian and Romance of the countries in which he made his campaigns, or where he travelled for amusement. 'I had plenty of fighting, and not much pay,' said he; 'I was the poor cavalry officer, who has a sword, a cloak, and a horse, until my twenty-fourth year; and then my chance came. To others it seemed the reverse of a lucky appointment. His Majesty, in the sunshine of whose favour I did not pretend to bask—for he had quite forgotten his godchild—gave me a place, at the request of my worthy relatives, the La Mothes, as tenth or twelfth *attaché*, the lowest possible, whichever it was, to the magnificent person, M. le Marquis de Condalot, who was going out as Minister Plenipotentiary and Ambassador Extraordinary to the Sublime Porte of Constantinople. I knew a good deal of Turkish, picked up from two or three vagabonds with whom I had consorted at one time in Paris and Vienna. To me the thing promised novelty and adventure; my dear comrades, like the homesick lads that French soldiers are—brave, delightful fellows; not a word against them, if you please; but homesick, mammy's boys as they always will be—talked of banishment and *là bas*. I found *là bas* uncommonly entertaining. How should I not? It was the Golden Horn. Never in my life but on two occasions, my son, have I shed tears at striking tents and marching away; never but twice—when I beheld the lovely line of Stamboul against its golden sky for the last time, and when I bade farewell to Shiraz. Ah, Shiraz, Shiraz! how true is that saying of the meditative Saadi in "*The Boustan*," "I have spent my days in distant travel; I have sojourned among nations the most diverse. Everywhere I have gathered

some profit; from every harvest have I gleaned a few sheaves; but nowhere else did I meet such pure and simple hearts as in Shiraz (the benediction of the Lord be upon it!). The love that fair city excites in me has made me forget Syria and Roum." Well, not perhaps Syria; to that I am coming in my tale.'

Then he told how, during his stay of eighteen months in Constantinople, he had made an acquaintance, which ripened fast into friendship, with a Persian poet, scholar and merchant, Abdullah Abbas, who was in the habit of travelling between various great Mahometan cities—from Delhi on the hand of the rising sun to Adrianople in the far west—and who proved himself an adept in the lore of his native singers and the religious philosophy which their quatrains and couplets conceal or display. 'From Abdullah—a grave, silent man, with a sweet expression of countenance, a pale face, a beak resembling the eagle's, and eyes full of light—I learned the most celebrated Odes of Hafiz. He chanted them with animation to his lute, though using no gesture (which is abhorrent to the serious Oriental), and in brief, sententious sayings, thrown in like pearls or roses, he made clear to me their recondite significance. Thus was I taken as in a diamond net.'

Marian did not read this prologue with much pleasure. She feared the old General would preach and be tiresome after all. But turning over a few pages, she was delighted to find that action rather than meditation had followed on this encounter with Abdullah. His friend Louis had now left the Embassy, having received an honourable discharge. M. le Marquis feared a subordinate who was proving himself an adept in diplomacy when the chance offered, as well as miraculously quick at digesting new languages. 'And I don't deny,' observed the General, 'that I felt an infinite scorn of this smiling, sugared imbecility, who conducted a negotiation with court-phrases, and postured like a dancing master. I had, too, the young man's sense of his own importance, and I daresay a bad

temper. I could not bear to look on, an idle spectator, at the amazing follies which M. de Condalot perpetrated. He was glad of the first opportunity that offered to get rid of me, and I was in ecstasies at leaving him to play the fool in his own way. My brother, my master, was Abdullah. By his suggestion I asked leave to explore the confused politics of Persia—at that time in the agonies of civil war—and to bring back a report of the land. Thus it was that I came to know and serve the only genuine King I have ever seen in my life of adventures—unless I should make an exception for His Majesty the late King of Prussia. But, in my judgment, Karim Khan Zend was a far greater man than Frederick II., whom M. de Voltaire first lauded to the skies and then dragged in the mire, according as the monarch gave him sugar plums or ruffled his feathers—the screaming cockatoo!

'When I was first presented to Karim Khan, in 1761, I saw a man some ten years older than myself, above the middle height, slender and sinewy, with features of an exquisite gentleness, lips rather full, large brown eyes that sparkled with soft fires, and the high Persian forehead which may still be observed on the monuments at Persepolis. He spoke his own language with exceeding grace and purity, was a writer of mystical canzonets, and far-travelled on the path of the Saints. This, indeed, it was that made Abdullah still his friend. They had known each other in early boyhood, went to the same madreseh, or school, and learned the sacred text of the Koran from the same master, Sohraverdi. And in their youthful enthusiasm they had made a vow to keep step with one another in the way of perfection. Now the contemplative Abdullah was a merchant, owning unknown wealth, but more and more disposed to quit all and throw round him the ragged coat of the dervish. And Karim? Volumes would not suffice to relate his extraordinary adventures. He had been a chief of brigands, or wild men of the mountains, fighting for independence, laying up the spoils of battle, winning and losing; yesterday a prisoner,

to-day a conqueror; but always faithful to the high doctrine which had been taught him by his Sheikh. Victory, at length, sat on his banners and flew before him. Shiraz opened its gates to the Zend chieftain, who was himself the impersonation of its genuine faith, its poetry, its chivalry, its old romance. He made it his capital; set up the handsome bazaar, overflowing with plenty, adorned with all the jewels and the brocades of Asia, abounding in splendid armour and fine manuscripts; to the north of the Meidan he had built his palace, beautiful within, light and graceful, with gardens, fountains and orangeries; and there, in the throne-room, I bowed before him most willingly. I would gladly have taken to my lips, as I stooped, the dust which those conquering feet had trodden.'

Through several of the following chapters, all in the lyric staff of an enthusiastic admiration for the Khan and his merchant companion, Louis Greystoke pictured his own increasing love of these two friends, the regard which they showed him, and the impregnation of his mind with their philosophy. 'They saw all things in God; and their existence was a constant but active dream—day-dreaming which intoxicates, but which gives light to the eye and vigour to the arm,' he wrote, 'as if some secret might were dwelling in them.' While revering the dignity of the Apostle of Allah, Mahomet, they had long passed beyond the letter of their law; its spiritual meaning alone had a purchase on their affections or could govern their practice. They were perfectly tolerant of Jews, Nazarenes, Fire-worshippers—and some of the vulgar imagined, nay, it was a common rumour, that the Zend himself put his hand to his lip on beholding the sun in its beauty, and was addicted in secret to the old Parsee ritual. But on this point General Greystoke professed to know better. 'I was their convert,' he went on to say, 'initiated in every stage of the journey they were going towards the Supreme. And though, as an outward symbol of His purity, what could be figured more majestic, sovereign and sublime than the Eye of Heaven? yet we did

not—we do not—worship aught save Him who is the pupil and the light of that ethereal eye.'

He was, then, a disciple of this ancient school. 'But no renegade,' exclaimed Greystoke; 'it is only foolish Europeans who have invented that ridiculous name. In submitting to Islam, I was far from renouncing Isa Ben-Mariam. I remembered the Court of Louis; I knew many of those who were friends of Voltaire; and some of the highest amongst the clergy had talked with freedom at tables where I dined. If these men, visiting Shiraz, had so much as dared to whisper the same things concerning their Prophet which in France they spoke aloud with impunity, the people and the companions of the Prince would have stoned them. Nothing so much amazed me, on my return to Europe, as the frivolity and irreverence which prevailed in high places among Christians. They had all drunk in the spirit of Voltaire. But Voltaire, had he jested thus in the hearing of our Sheikhs and dervishes, would have met the fate of an unclean cur in the holy place.'

'After I had entered on the path of the Friends—which is called Tarikat,' thus said the General, continuing, 'and had exchanged the vulgar habiliments of the Western infidel for the garments, at once manly and decorous, which gentlemen wear in a land of sunshine, and as part of the ritual whereunto as a harmony their whole life is attuned, I thought myself not only free to quit the service of France, but even called by a divine vocation. The Sultan of Shiraz honoured me with a commission; and I spent eight happy years by his side—always near him on the battlefield, in the council chamber, and in his hours of enjoyment, save the pilgrimages that I made, as a Moslem is wont, to the tomb of the Apostle and the shrines of the beloved Imams. I journeyed once to Mecca, thrice to Cufa and the Holy Sepulchres of Ali and Hussein. For Hussein my affection had always been without bounds, ever since I heard the story of his piteous betrayal and his death in the wilderness. I desired to take his

name. The favour was permitted me; and in my own thoughts I then once for all ceased to be Louis Greystoke. I was the Hadji Hussein, much looked up to, and, I may venture to say, held as a good Sufi, or religious person, by the many who had heard of my pilgrimages, and who saw me return from battle with their victorious Khan.

'But imagine not, my dear Harold, that we, for whom so wonderful a light had gone up into the sky, were sectarians, cleaving to religion as to some evil passion, and striking our enemies on the face with anathemas. Doubtless you know of the Great Schism of the East, which divides the Persian, who recognises Ali alone as the Apostle's Vicar, from the Turk and the Egyptian and the Arab, in whose eyes those others are genuine, Abu Bekr and the rest. For men like the Prince, for devout seekers like Abdullah, there was no difference between Shiah and Sunni; to us they were but soldiers wearing the uniform of the King, a little diversified. And in our musical singers, as Farid Eddin, how delighted were we to quote their praises of Omar and Ali, both friends of God! When the Magian, too, and the Nazarene came about the palace, Karim dealt benevolently with all. The mosque, the temple, the convent, yea, and saith Hafiz, in his bold imagery, the tavern also, were all our places of worship.

'Fain would I tell you, and paint the large and expressive picture of those years; my sacred journeys, with all their original features, under a sky at once glowing and distant, or pitilessly breathing into our mouths its furnace airs, while the harsh, crude colours of rock and sand, of desert and mountain side, alternated with the pure green by the rivulets, the white and purple and yellow of the tall asphodels, high as a horse's girth, sometimes overshadowing our steeds as we passed along; and the perfect hours of the night, cool and tranquil, infinite in lucent shade. On the way to Meshed Ali I could not but encounter that strangest, saddest of all caravans which bears the dead from their

abandoned homes to the ground in which they shall sleep near their Imam, until the heavens be broken up. A lugubrious procession—the Dance of Death in grim and dreadful earnest, whereof on a bridge at Lucerne in the Alps I remember seeing a delineation. This was rather a minuet, slowly pacing forth over the dust-coloured plain — grey camels, drivers with white head-dresses, and the corpses carried as they were merchandise, all smothered in the cloud that rose with them of ashen grey. And the sun smote on them out of a pale blue heaven; and the men seemed ghouls at mid-day; but the chant, which from hour to hour they lifted up in a plaintive key, I might have fancied was the wailing of spirits unseen that followed them, low and long and wearied in its lamentation, a burden to the soul when it was heard no more. With this caravan of sorrow into Meshed I came; and how well did I understand the tears which from the heart of Hussein's tomb were poured out in dew on these mourners! I made no pilgrimage to a house or a dead man; but to the fountain of grief which springs out of the hard rock, and which, in its tender flowing, melts away all vanities. And thus did Hafiz exclaim in his vehement longing,—

'"Oh fragrant morning breeze, where is the resting-place of the Beloved? Where the dwelling of that moon, that magician, who slays us with love?"

For me, I found it in no wise at Mecca; but where Hussein rested, there did that moon rise.

'Divine, more than all, were the long hours I spent in Shiraz at night, when the city fell asleep, and its sounds were hushed, save for the fitful howling of dogs or jackals, which, in its sudden rise and fall, intensified the stillness. Then would the Khan, with Abdullah and myself, mount to his palace roof, and we three, as comrades and equals, seated on our piled-up cushions, would look out on the dark, fiery jewel of the sky, hollow as the cup of Jemshid, a blue faintly tinged with cornelian, in which goblet Allah Almighty

had flung the golden moon, which swam there, round and full, on torrents of wine. Such is the night of the East, unlike this shrouded Western spectre, frightful to behold, in whose countenance the very stars look wan. There would we sit, silent companions, or now and again uttering the thoughts which unfolded themselves like flowers of some new world within us. Often we broke silence but to whisper as in a pleasant dream stanzas from the poets, who more and more had become to us scriptures of the faith, and in their depths disclosed ever new meanings. We neither smoked tobacco, nor ate of haschish, nor drank wine. And this, also, that the Sultan put no fire to his lips, was by some reckoned against him; for such is the law of the Fire-worshippers. But, as not drinking wine, he and we deserved pardon, since on this head the Persians are without scruple. Our wine, our narcotic, was the draught of the supercelestial Love, under whose influence we blew the world from our lips as it had been a soap-bubble. We felt no need of intoxication; the cup-bearer had passed by, and his glance satisfied us.

'Yet a change was approaching, due to these snatches of converse in the night, as we looked down on sleeping Shiraz. Our friend Abdullah had gone before us on the Path; he was come to the stage of entire severance, where a man gives up all things. And though Karim said, in accordance with the Tradition, "Brother, if the bird be on the wing, what signifies the net which he has seen?" still, our dear merchant would cast away also the net in our sight. He did not counsel me to cease from soldiering or the Khan from reigning. "Ye are in the house," he said, "as officers, and ye may not desert. But as for me, I have left it, and no voice calls me back."

'I thought him a little headstrong. I would have had him stay as the Vizier in the city, and be a guardian to Karim's eldest son, who was to be proclaimed, though by a stretch of prerogative and not in the usual course of the law, his successor. Perchance, had he given ear to my warning, the dynasty

of the Zend were not now fallen. But there is no majesty and no might except in Allah. On a set day, Abdullah gave his slaves their freedom, scattered largesse throughout Shiraz, and when he had made abundant provision in charity, laid up his immense store of jewels among the treasures of the Khan. Afterwards, giving his sumptuous raiment to the most ancient of the slaves in his house, putting on the Khirka, or ragged woollen garment, of the pious pilgrim, and taking his rosary of a thousand beads, he left the city, friends going with him until he was over the pass of Allahu Akbar. He would not tell us of his destination. We knew that he had taken a vow never to see his dearest again; and, as we let him go, our hearts were broken. But so had the Beloved taken him into the cloud; who were we to keep him lingering on our stage of the Heavenly Journey?'

CHAPTER V

THE FAIR SYRIAN

'ABDULLAH was gone. And, in no long while, Karim, admonished by illness, thought to stablish the succession by alliances on the right hand and the left. He had employed me before in embassies to his own satisfaction; but the charge now given me was splendid, and its issue uncertain. He would send me, with a great retinue, as his own confidential friend, to Ali Bey, the Mameluke ruler of Egypt. Ali—this white slave who had made himself a King—was then at the height, blazing like a star, with sword as well as crown, not only on the banks of the Nile, but over the expanse of Syria and up to the Cilician Gates. We heard that he was come to Damascus; thither, accordingly, our caravan, laden with rich stuffs, wound its way across the Desert. And as we entered on a more smiling land, never shall I call to mind without a strange melancholy the sight we had of a village, cool in its green shade, with palm trees scattered about, and the glade one sheet of anemones, to which on a certain evening we drew near. It was not possible to seek shelter, had we needed it, with the inhabitants; for they, as we learned, were fierce and even fanatical Nazarenes, of the Maronite sect, whose hopes of greater freedom had been excited by the victories of Ali Bey over the Turks. We did not, however, wish to lie under a roof; and through the curtains of my tent, under a purple moon, I saw, during the still hours when I chanced to awaken, the fair, white phantom of a village with its palms bending over it. The place was called Abu Marya.

'On arriving at the beautiful city we found that Ali Bey had been turned back the way he came by news of a conspiracy in Al Cairo; and it was our duty to follow him; but we went slowly, that his wrath might have time to cool, for it is not safe to meet the lion when he is standing above his prey. But we were made welcome in the court of this Mameluke Arslan, who had a singular gift of winning strangers when he chose to exercise it. Our lodging was in a sumptuous palace, not far from the mosque of Sultan Hassan; and there it came to pass that the most fateful adventure in my life happened to me, on the wise following,—

'Being tired out after three days' camping with Ali Bey, who was then marshalling his troops for a fresh expedition, I had gone up to the roof of my house in the late afternoon, and there took rest beneath an awning; but so fatigued was I, that, instead of waking when an hour was past, I slept on, until I heard as in a dream the voice of the muezzin calling to prayer from the neighbouring mosque. Ashamed of my indolence, I sprang up and stood in the open stretching myself; and as I did so, I became confusedly aware of a damsel who was observing me through the apertures in her veil, where she stood, not many yards distant, but behind the parapet of a lofty house adjoining ours. So close indeed was the girl to me that, if I dared to leap the narrow space between, in a few moments I should have stood by her side. Now it was not the time for a man to be sleeping; neither ought I to have remained on the roof at such an hour, since it is then that the women of the harem come forth to take the air and to hold their drawing-room; nor does any one of the other sex venture to show himself then in that way. However, all the women must have gone down, save only this maiden, whose eyes were fixed on me with an intense curiosity. And I in turn gazed at her; whereupon, coming yet closer, with a sudden motion she put aside her veil, and I saw an Eastern face, beautiful enough to satisfy the descriptions in their luxuriant verse. The clear forehead, with dark lashes over large and still darker eyes, the eyebrows almost

joined, the complexion a warm brown tint, the teeth like shining coral, and the lips, though she spoke not a syllable, eloquent with some beseeching emotion that made them tremble slightly. Her attire was magnificent—a tunic of embroidered satin, blood-red; trousers of as vivid a blue, fringed with golden wire, and jewelled slippers. In her hand she appeared to be holding a kerchief; and while I continued motionless, in an attitude of deep surprise, she rolled it up into a ball, and flung it dexterously across, so that it fell at my feet. I stooped and took up the handkerchief, which was wrought of purple silk and seed pearls; and therein I found a tiny scrap torn from the beginning of some poem, which had on it, written in Arabic, the word "To-morrow." No more than this. But the word, the action, and, above all, the unveiling of so fair a face, threw me into a strange perplexity. When I lifted my eyes a second time the damsel had vanished.

'Now I was not ignorant of the circumstance that this house, adjoining ours, was the chief dwelling of a personage, with whom to meddle would have been the extreme of folly. It belonged to none other than Ali Bey's son-in-law, who was likewise the Grand Vizier—a man well known then, but exceedingly celebrated afterwards—the impetuous, daring and unscrupulous Abu Dahab, with whom my dealings had been frequent, but not altogether favourable. He had not returned from the camp to Al Cairo, but any day might be expected. This, I felt certain, was one of his wives or his slaves—most probably a slave, although, as Cairene ladies have many tales told about them, she might even be some proud beauty of the harem who, in the confidence of her charms, would venture thus to defy her lord and master. I knew, after so many years' experience in the East, how little do the latticed and barred windows, the guarded inner courts, and the merciless black slaves, contrive to render all communications from without impossible. The girl might be acting, too, evident as the expression was of trouble which I detected in her countenance. I thought, from her looks, she might be sixteen years old;

there was still in her bearing that union of childish grace with womanly dignity which is so pathetic, above all in countries where the time of beauty is soon over.

'To-morrow came, and I hesitated whether I would ascend to the roof any more. Did not my duty as an ambassador forbid me to sacrifice the interests of my dear master, Karim Zend, whose prosperity might hang upon this alliance? Neither was I the youth abounding in sentiment, or susceptible to feminine wiles, that could not draw back when Zuleika beckoned. I must leave the Fair Unknown to the tender mercies of Abu Dahab. Yet I still remained in my house, and the thought did not occur to me of quitting Al Cairo.

'That day passed without event. But hardly had the third morning dawned when I heard the voice of a black slave in the vestibule, demanding an audience of Hadji Hussein Bey. It was not an unusual hour, and I admitted him. The young man that now stood in my presence was absolutely dark, but with features carved as regularly as in the best Egyptian sculpture; and, though already inclining to be stout and somewhat unwieldy, there was an ease in his movements, and a sort of agile lightness, that went well with his perfect mask. This kind of slave is often insolent; but Masud was gentle and even courteous, displaying in all he did a grave melancholy which, I confess, went to my heart. After the customary salutation, he told me, without the least embarrassment, why he had come. I was requested to hold an interview with the First Lady of Abu Dahab's harem, the Princess, daughter of Ali Bey; and Masud was willing to lead me into the Palace. "But," I stammered, "surely it was not the First Lady whom—whom?" and there I broke down. I could go no farther; yet I never would believe that one who had been wife to the Grand Vizier during several years could still bear about her that freshness of springtide which was the charm of my Incognita. Masud smiled ever so little, and answered,—

'"The First Lady thou hast not seen, nor wilt see. That pearl of the morning in whose beams thou wert

illumined was another; and it is on her account the Princess will have thee to come. No risk in obeying! If thou refuse—for more than one death lies in ambush."

'Then, as I would not be led blindfold, little by little the story came out. Perhaps it is not quite rare, even among a people so light, easy-going and frivolously selfish as the modern Egyptians of Al Cairo; but when I became, so to speak, an actor in the play, I was conscious of its depth and tenderness. The girl, Masud went on to inform me, who had raised her veil and thrown the scrap of verse—for he was watching when it happened—was called Jasmin, as we say in French, but the actual word is Ilsamin, and a Christian slave. Her present master, Abu Dahab, had bought her, six months before, in the open market of Alexandria, and sent her on to this house. Her music and singing were of the finest; she read admirably—and reading with perfect ease and intelligence is a difficult and much prized accomplishment among Easterns—while her extraordinary loveliness captivated the heart of the Vizier, so that he was ready to bestow upon her a thousand favours. But she would not look at him. As a slave, she did not refuse to show off the talents which a previous master had taken care to cultivate in so promising a disposition. More she resolutely declined. She was a Christian; she would be married to a husband of one wife, or die unwedded. And though the Vizier could do with her as he pleased, her vow was taken. "But he," said Masud, "is generous, or, at least, not vile; hitherto he has been patient. He returns shortly, and his patience will be at an end. Now, thou must be presented to the First Lady, who will enlighten thee as to the rest. Come with me."

'I began to yield, as a man does to whom the taste of adventure is always pleasant, and danger itself a high spice. The plan, by means of which I was to penetrate within the courts of the Harem, had been already drafted.

'"It is known," said the Nubian, "that though a venerable Hadji, thou art by nation a Frank, and all

Franks are physicians. Don, therefore, the costume and put on the air of a Frank hakim. The Princess declares that she is taken with a severe illness, which our doctors cannot cure by the drugs they send, by talismans, or by incantations; and thou, the great foreign leech, hast said that, unless thou feel the lady's pulse and see the colour of her tongue, advice from thee will be thrown away. I have gained over the chief eunuch, who is friendly to me, and who asks only that I should never leave thee out of my sight. Is it not well-contrived?"

'I thought so; and I had some faint glimmering of the character which I was expected to take on me in this drama. When Masud spoke of Ilsamin, his voice softened strangely. "Art thou and this child friends?" I asked him.

A sudden catching at the chest made it impossible for him to answer during a moment or two; and then he said in an undertone, "I would die for her."

'"And Madame la Princesse, does she like or dislike her Christian rival?"

'"She does not hate her," was the reply. When I heard these things, I made up my mind to risk the adventure.

'Behold me, then, disguised as a physician, passing in Masud's company, without haste or trepidation, through all the doors, and at length introduced into a hall, the floor of which was carpeted with velvet brocade, the walls hung with cloth of gold, and censers of aloes and sweet-smelling woods filled the air as with an intoxicating essence. A high dome let in the light from above, and at the sides were long, narrow windows of stained glass. But across the centre of the room a thick curtain, fastened to the floor and walls with gold rings, divided the whole into equal parts; and as I approached, Masud—who was ever standing by me with a drawn sword—whispered in my ear, "Make thy salam." I did so, bowing to the ground, whereupon an opening was made in the folds of the curtain, and a pair of eyes glanced upon me; but they were not

Ilsamin's. I understood, therefore, that I was in the presence of the First Lady; and I stood with my hands behind my back, the left grasping the right, in an attitude of extreme humility. After a space the lady began, "Art thou the Frank physician, whom I sent for?"

'"At thy pleasure, lady."

'"Canst thou cure the mind as well as the body with thy simples, oh hakim?"

'"The mind? Not with simples. Other ways must be taken with the mind."

'"It is well. What other ways?"

'"I should know the disease first, lady, before I can prescribe."

'"The disease," she answered in a voice somewhat stifled with laughter, but recovering itself and becoming serious, "is called love by poets and story-tellers. And canst thou alleviate its troubles?"

'"Not without an interview," I replied; hastening to add, "Thou, Lady, hast no such disease, and talkest not of thyself."

'"I have none, Allah be praised!" she said; "it is my *slave*," with a strong emphasis on the word. "My *slave*, Ilsamin, that is afflicted."

'"Tell me the symptoms of her trouble, if it please thee to do so, Lady."

The same half-mocking voice continued, "Know then, oh physician, that this Ilsamin is, of a surety, infatuated since her arrival in the Golden City. For she hath fallen in love with one, a stranger to her kith and kin, a Frank even as thou art; that is to say, not having the blue eyes, as it were porcelain, nor the corpse-like whiteness of visage, nor the red and scanty beard of thy countrymen; but"—and here I could observe the eyes taking my measure as I stood humbly bent down—"a dark-haired, dark-whiskered Faranji, whose colour is between bronze and brown, his forehead somewhat sallow, his eyes like unto wells of water in the desert, and himself slender as a willow tree, and with the bounding step of the Arab. Such is the man, or rather demon, who hath fascinated Ilsamin."

'This I knew was part caricature and part compliment; but, on hearing a rustle behind the curtain, and the whisper of a second voice, it struck me, as I had suspected from the beginning, that Jasmin was in attendance on her lady. I replied at once, "If such be the Frank, he is even as a son of the East in his appearance. Let thy slave be given to him."

'A sudden cry of joy interrupted me; but the Princess would herself be heard. "Peace," she said, "how can I make a present to this Frank of my lord's servant? For this, too, I must tell thee; she hath found favour in the sight of Abu Dahab; and there madness hath entered in also. This Christian, this purchased girl, hath dared to tell her owner that he must marry her, yea, and divorce his wives, or she will not cast an eye upon him. Heardest thou ever of such confidence in a bought slave?"

'As if this were too much, a girl's voice broke in with tears and protests, "Oh, my lady! never did I dream of a treason so black. I desire only of Abu Dahab that he would send to my father, the Maronite, and take ransom for me."

'"Thou art a fool, Jasmin," said her mistress, composedly, "many another girl hath risen from the selling-block to the royal seat; and who knows but thou shalt win thy way thither? Truly, were I like the Sultana Zubeida, I had cut thee in four quarters and served up the banquet to Abu Dahab. Wilt thou have him divorce me, pretty one?" "Nay," saith she, "and pearls fall from her brimming eyes." And it was true; I could hear the damsel sobbing; this mixture of comedy and tragedy overcame her, as well it might, for none can tell how suddenly the Eastern sky will change from sunshine to scathing storm.

'"I will take the maiden," said I, "and deliver into the hand of this Frank one who is so loyal to him. Thus shalt thou also, Lady, be free from apprehension?"

'She seemed to be reflecting. "I know not," was her next observation, as if to herself, "were it not better to ask of the physician some white powder that

I could give the damsel? How shall she be taken secretly from the Harem? And how abide therein without my displeasure?"

'I turned to Masud, "Speak now and tell thy device; it is the hour." And he spoke as we had concerted. It was a very ingenious plan—for reasons which will appear I need not go into it—and the Princess gave a sort of acquiescence. She was clearly wavering between fear of what might happen if we failed and a true, though not very deep, feeling of kindness towards Ilsamin. At last she exclained, "In the name of God," thereby signifying her consent; and in the same instant, while her voice warned us that she was leaving the hall, I saw one breadth of the curtain roll on its golden hinges, and a young girl stepped forth alone. Yes, it proved to be the same gorgeous dress, and the same sweet though troubled face which I had scanned two days previously —again the veil was put back, and Ilsamin, with a timid, uncertain motion, fell at my feet.

'I raised her up in a confusion not less than her own. "My lord, my master," she murmured, "be good to me. Thou art the first—not friend," she said hastily, with a tender glance towards Masud, who had put his sword into his sheath, and was looking on the ground in silence. "Ah, no, for this youth is a true friend to me—but thou art my deliverer; and how long I have waited for thee! Do not think I saw thee only three days ago; often did I look through the lattices and consider thee in thy riding past, when Masud told me thou wert a Frank, though bearing a Moslem name."

'"I have many names, my child," said I, "but let me hear thy story. Have we time?" to Masud. He signified by a gesture that she might go on.

'"My story is soon told. No, no delay! But thou shouldest be acquainted with so much. I am the daughter of a Maronite chief—Maronite, Frank—thou knowest—all as one. Abu Marya, on the way from Palmyra to Damascus, there we abode. Hast thou seen the place?" I said yes, with a motion of the hand. Time was passing like the wind; I thought some distant

stir in the palace betokened danger. "From my home," continued Jasmin, whispering, "I was stolen by Bedawins at nine years of age, carried down to Smyrna, sold there, once more taken over sea, and sold again in the market at Kairouan—to a good master, though a Moslem. He taught me—how many things? I was to him as a daughter; but he would not hold me to ransom. I remembered always that I was a Christian—always. Then he died—God be merciful to Mahmud Effendi! And again I was in the market Abu Dahab saw me and gave a heap of gold for this body which he coveted, but which I will fling into the live flame ere he shall touch me. And I said that I would die rather than be concubine or wife in this fearful place. Then Masud took pity on my wretchedness, and he bade me not lose hope; there was one, he said, lately come to Al Cairo, a good Moslem, one who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, but a Frank; and—he felt sure—not such as Abu Dahab. For this Frankish Moslem had no harem at all, but lived single and with a blameless reputation, unlike the Persians, the men of Ajam, that we see. And it was thou, oh friend! Thus I came to trust in thee. I was haughty and proud enough in manner to do much as I listed in the palace; and if I went hither or thither while Masud kept watch upon me, there was no suspicion. That is all my tale. When wilt thou take me out of this den?"

'I answered in what terms of affection, with such promise, as would give her courage. "Wait, Ilsamin," said I, "wait another three days; it is not long. Masud shall see thee over the first stage; I will answer for the rest."

'But even then I was on the point of perishing. A sound of arms and music in the outer court announced some arrival. Was it the Vizier himself? Jasmin fled behind the curtain with one appealing look; and Masud dragged me hastily along through a labyrinth of cross passages, from the barred windows of which I saw Ali Bey with a numerous staff at the gate of the palace. Surely I was doomed. But in a Cairene house there

are secrets known to the slaves which the master would be long in discovering. When we had reached a kind of store-room, the door of which was opened to Masud on his giving a peculiar signal, I found myself stepping on a square of carpet that he plucked immediately from under my feet. A second movement of the energetic Nubian was to pull up a piece of the flooring carefully fitted in, which this carpet concealed; and I saw below me the dark waters of a canal. In another moment, following his directions, I was hanging to a rope which he let down cautiously some eighteen or twenty feet. The descent was not without peril; but when I had effected it in safety, my feet touched a narrow ledge of stones, like the coping of an arch; and still with a hand on the rope that Masud kept holding, I guided myself gradually out of this difficult place into a winding and deserted lane. No sooner had I reached it than, on looking back, I saw the cord drawn and the aperture closed. From afar off still resounded the drums and brazen instruments that made music for the Pasha.

'I reached home unmolested, and at once set about my preparations to carry out the bold and simple plan suggested by Masud. Until I heard Ilsamin tell her sad story I might perhaps have been uncertain of my course; but her innocence and determination made my scruples appear almost unmanly; and I thought how Abdullah would have urged me on, had he been present during that painful scene. Like myself, he detested slavery, and still more the horrible kidnapping of children, without which it must long since have died for want of fuel. A devouring flame it truly was! And I knew something of the life which Ilsamin called dreadful, and of those palace-dens where, amid splendours inconceivable, the best of human feelings are speedily corrupted and the roses turn to poisonous weeds. I longed to set Jasmin free. But on the day succeeding our interview, the Nubian came to me with eyes of terror, and a passion in his voice beyond all words. Our plan was utterly defeated.

'Abu Dahab, on his return from the camp in high and insolent mood—it seemed he was more powerful than ever with Ali—had sent for Jasmin to entertain him. She sang and played, but would not consent to dance before her master; yet so charming did he find the girl—doubtless all the more beautiful that she was not spoiled by the lack of shame too common in her kind—so deeply was the Vizier affected as to offer, there and then, to marry her, and even to dismiss the ladies of his harem. She refused all his offers; she implored him to send to her people and take ransom on her behalf. The Mameluke, drunk with her beauty, and accustomed to see every man and woman in Al Cairo give way to his caprice, was stung as by a gadfly; his senses left him; he swooned; and, on coming back to himself, went forth, changed his garments to blood red —a sign of awful note—and calling for one of his stewards, Mansur, a vile and loathsome slave, he delivered the pure young girl into his hands, telling him that she was henceforth his kitchenmaid, to flog, to torture, to deal with despitefully.

'This Mansur had charge of a country house, surrounded with palm trees, on the edge of the Nile, in a pleasant spot, almost opposite the Isle of Rodah; and he was intending to convey Jasmin thither on the night of this very day when Masud came to me. If nothing could be done, torments, and worse than torments, awaited the child. What did I propose? As Masud spoke, I could see that he was trembling from head to foot, and his teeth chattered. He was beside himself.

'The time, though all too brief, gave us about fourteen hours in which to make provision against what Mansur intended. I had with me from Shiraz several of Karim's most trusty followers, who would go into the fire had I bidden them; and, being looked upon by the Cairenes as Shiahs, or heretics, there was little fear of communication between the two parties. These men were already on the alert, for I had taken them into the plan which Abu Dahab's sudden fit of violence rendered

impracticable. However, they could help us in another way, and I sent them with instructions towards the old Al Cairo, Masr al Atiqa, where the country house in question was situated.

'Our Nubian friend and reporter (I will not call him by the dishonourable name of spy) kept us, during these excited and miserable hours, acquainted with all that was going forward. And the Vizier still wore his crimson robe—an evil omen. Mansur, on the other hand, was in high feather. He had the reputation of being cruel, greedy and voluptuous; and, in countries like Egypt, as throughout the East, a man climbs to power by satisfying his master's fancies in matters of vengeance even more quickly than by procuring him sensual pleasure. Jasmin had not simply resisted the Vizier's solicitations; she had humbled his pride. All day long she sat apart, voiceless, one mute expectation, but, though terrified, showing not the least change of feeling. The night drew on; we had planted our scouts; and with a small company I sallied out on my expedition to Mansur's villa. We had taken every precaution so as not to be observed. Fortunately there was no moon. What we knew from Masud convinced us that Ilsamin would be brought along the river when night had fallen, in a boat despatched from the Vizier's, and manned under direction of the steward. We awaited its appearance in a thicket down by the bank, close to the stream, our horses picketed near enough to enable us, if the party proved more than our match, to take refuge in flight, or to carry away our prize immediately, did we prove successful.

'We waited with beating hearts. Ilsamin had been warned by Masud, and she was to wear, as a token, round her wrist, the red kerchief she had thrown to me. The hours went slowly by. At length we heard the plashing of oars, and looking out stealthily saw a boat coming up stream at a rapid rate, the decks not overmanned, while two figures standing at the stem and stern held aloft flaming cressets, which cast a blood-red gleam on the waters. It was a moment of intense anxiety when

the boat grounded, and Mansur, as I judged by his arrogant shoulders and bloated face, leaped out, followed by two or three, half leading and half pushing onward a reluctant veiled woman, about whose wrist I saw the crimson kerchief.

"The next instant we had fallen upon them with loud shouts. Taken utterly unawares, the other men fled into the thicket, yelling as if a troop of devils were at their heels. The oarsmen, hearing a confused sound of battle, and not having the slightest intention of risking their own skins, backed water at once, turned the boat down stream, and rowed off as fast as they had come. Mansur alone would not leave his prey. Drawing sword immediately he parried the blow I was aiming at his headpiece ; and being skilful enough in this exercise, for a few moments he seemed likely to hold us at bay, when Jasmin, plucking out of my girdle the dagger which I carried there, with a motion swift as lightning struck it into Mansur's heart. He gave a sort of frightful leap upwards and fell dead to the ground. One of my men took the body, as it lay, in his arms, and without a moment's hesitation flung it into the Nile. Heavily weighted as it was with garments of the Oriental fashion, it sank immediately. And taking to our horses, with Ilsamin on the saddle clinging to me, we fled all that night, until we were many miles from Masr al Atiqa.

'The sequel of the story has yet to be told. It was most unexpected. For ten days we camped among the ruins of the ancient Nile temples, keeping watch and ward against what might happen. Then, as if returning from a shooting expedition, we went back publicly, under the broad sunshine, into Al Cairo, my men all about me, and Ilsamin riding as a young Mameluke boy, or white page, among them. The city was in a ferment ; some great thing had come to pass. On arriving at my palace, and having seen Jasmin safe into the apartments prepared for my occupation, where I left her as if suffering from an attack of fever, I made inquiries concerning the news of the day, and, to my

astonishment, I was told that Abu Dahab had fallen under Ali's stern displeasure, that he was in disgrace, and had fled by way of the Desert, as it was thought meaning to stir up troubles in Syria.

'What was the occasion of his sudden downfall? The Cairenes had a thousand stories on the subject, all different, most incredible. Palace intrigues do not lend themselves to the light of the sun. Yet I was not long uncertain of the part which Jasmin's disappearance had played in bringing about the catastrophe. Within a few days Ali Bey sent for me to the Citadel. What did he want with me? How much did he know? I put on a bold face, and obeyed the summons. He was full of courtesies, made me sit by him on the divan, and announced his acquiescence in all that Karim Khan had proposed. Would I, in return, persuade my master to join the Egyptians in an assault on the Turkish power, which was lifting its heel once more in Syria? I promised, so far as in me lay, and was retiring, when Ali broke out into a furious invective against the traitor Abu Dahab.

'Ali had not an Osmanli's reticence of speech; he thundered against a slave whom he had raised from the dust, to whom he had given his daughter in marriage, and who, having lost some vile Christian girl out of his seraglio, had been shameless enough to charge the Princess with conniving at her escape, and mad enough to divorce her and send her back to the Pasha. Well for him that he had put spurs to his horse the same hour; he would have had the courbash laid to him until the breath was out of his body. Not once, but a dozen times, the Pasha went over his wrongs and depicted the revenge he would take of Abu Dahab. I must help him; Karim Khan must help him; and so, in a whirlwind of rage, he dismissed me.

'In all this I wondered at our own good fortune; and I asked myself where was Masud? Ah! unhappy, I saw him too, and how changed! He appeared in my palace a month later, so weak and crippled I started back at the sight of him. Being in the household of the

Princess, he had fallen under Abu Dahab's suspicion, and had been frightfully tortured; but he kept his lips close, underwent a thousand deaths, and would have perished had not the great lady claimed him as her slave. Tender-hearted Masud—I suffered him to speak with Ilsamin once more. He said but little, and never came again. I knew afterwards that he died of a broken heart, as many of his kind have done under the stress of a passion too vehement for endurance. Never shall I forget his great love, his loyalty beyond all price, his sad and noble story. And he was a black slave, reckoned among the lowest of mankind, hardly to be called a man, and yet a hero!

'My time in Egypt was drawing to a disastrous end. News came of my dear master's death; and soon after, sentence of perpetual banishment was pronounced against me and other of his friends by that foolish Rehoboam who succeeded him. I did not dare to seek out Jasmin's father while the war went on in Syria, and Abu Dahab held Damascus. Al Cairo was a prison out of which we might now escape, but perhaps not later. I resolved on taking Jasmin to France, and marrying her according to the Catholic rite, when we should have arrived in Paris. Adventures still dogged our footsteps. We embarked in a French vessel at Alexandria, were driven out of our course, pursued a long summer's day by Turkish pirates who came out of Tunis, had to delay three months at La Valetta, and there, after much formality, were made man and wife.

'I need not say what a perfect companion Jasmin proved to me, how full of exquisite charm, how devoted, how the liveliest, gentlest, best of friends in solitude, and—ah me!—how little made to endure the hard ways of our Western world! She sank under them. She was not twenty-five when you, my Harold, were born. And you never knew her! Two months from that day I lost the Fair Syrian, who to me will remain for ever a sweet remembrance, gay and tender and childlike, upon whose eyes the flame had passed, leaving them pure as an angel's. We often talked of Masud. He was like

an invisible friend to both of us; for Jasmin could not feel at home in French society; and I, with my visions of another world—the disciple of Abdullah and Karim—how could I love either the frivolities or the fanaticism that were driving on to the ruin in which you, and I, and all of us are now overwhelmed?

'Come, Messieurs les Sansculottes, the door is open. Send me to join these dear ones, if it please the Lord. And thou, Harold, take what I have written; keep it in the sacred kerchief that Ilsamin once gave me; abide in England—our old-new country—until this storm be past; eschew the intolerance of the Court and the Revolution; and forget not thy Syrian mother, who was the noblest of women. The Peace of Allah be upon thee, oh my son!'

CHAPTER VI

TRANCE-WAKING

IT was among these papers, and in the course of reading thus singularly opened, that Marian Greystoke discovered the portrait of Jasmin—a slight, unfinished drawing—that she thought to have been sketched by the General. And she insisted on a likeness with herself which others, perhaps, would not have seen. There was enough, at all events, to set her day-dreaming, and awaken in her fancy the enchanted universe which happier children knew as the *Arabian Nights,* but which for her was all contained within these musky pages. The Old Testament, then, was not ancient history, dead and done with! Her ancestor had walked about in it, had gone through these thousand adventures belonging to it, and had almost written a second Book of Esther from his own life. That was the marvel which took her breath away. Esther and Jasmin were the same—maidens all perfume and attar of roses, accomplished, beautiful, living in king's houses, with slaves to wait on them, in Shushan, the royal city. She was taken up on wings into this dream; she flew with it day after day, happy in so brilliant a delusion, and waking with disdain to the petty miseries she must endure. Now—now, at last—the end of all was come. Fancy a rude country lad like her Cousin Charlie offering a share in his farm, his poultry, his geese and pigeons, to Esther—to Ilsamin! It was too hateful; she would rather be sold as a slave in the market of that unpronounceable place, Kairouan, and fetch her price in gold, if there were anyone to purchase her.

So, then, Mrs Greystoke, thus thy scheme of an austere education for Marian was frustrated! The Bible itself had become thine enemy. A hundred doors hadst thou locked, and taken away the key; but there was another which thine eye passed over unobserved! It is an old, old story. The Princess had been shut up in the brazen tower, a couple of furlongs from the ground, windows sealed, gates all barred, every entrance made fast, except the little postern down by the oozy river; and there, precisely there, when no moon gave its light, the wicked magician crept in, who was to steal her away. This dreary Monday morning she meant to put her hand in his, and travel forth to see the wide world, an innocent dreamer.

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As the clock struck two, Mrs Greystoke, after unlocking the captive's door, came in bearing a tray, on which was set a small loaf, with cheese on a plate, and a glass of milk. 'That is your luncheon, Marian,' she said in her deepest tones; 'when you have eaten it, your father will see you in his study.' Whereupon she was departing without more words.

The girl pushed away her prison fare, and in a moment was at the door. 'I will go to him now,' she replied, 'Have the kindness to let me pass.' Her behaviour shook Mrs Greystoke; it was horrible; but she said no more, and Marian ran quickly down the stairs. That episode was finished; never again should it be enacted.

'Well, Marian,' said her father, as she stood before him, not at all like a culprit, but with a certain inquiring glance in her large, bright eyes—'Well, Marian, what is this little misunderstanding with your mother? Sit down and tell me all about it.' He leaned back carelessly in his great, padded chair behind the writing-table, which was studded with drawers and brass handles, and balanced an ivory paper knife between his long, white fingers as he spoke. A handsome man, with grey whiskers and hair just turning of that colour, eyes not unlike his daughter's, but fuller in the eyeball, and, if

the expression may be allowed, trembling with unquiet eagerness. The mouth sweet-tempered, and the chin, which was shaven bare, undecided and weak. It is curious how one thought of him as a picture always, rather than a living man who could walk about. Handsome but ineffective! It was not from him that Marian derived her temper.

She sat down in the shade of a great magnolia which stood on a screen near the bookcase; and, looking steadily across at the Vicar, answered with a smile, 'If you will promise, father, to help me out of it, I will tell you all I can. But you must promise. There is no reason why it should be a misunderstanding with you too.'

'Your mother means well by you, child,' said Mr Greystoke.

'It would be too bad if she didn't; considering how she acts by me,' returned Marian, 'the least one can do is to have good intentions.'

'Now, now, Marian, is that respectful? Do weigh your words, my dear child. You *will* be impetuous, as I have often told you. Where is that spoonful of honey I have recommended?'

'To catch wasps?' she said, laughing. 'We seem to live in a nest of them. But, father, is it to be expected that I should endure patiently the treatment of a child, as if I were a little girl in short frocks? How can mother suppose it?'

'She merely wished to know what your cousin had been saying.'

'Quite so. And what if there were good reasons for not repeating it just now?'

'Good reasons? Between a girl of your age and her mother? My dear Marian, you are talking—excuse me—but isn't it nonsense?'

'No,' said Marian, her cheek flushing with vexation, 'it is no such thing. I am old enough to decide for myself in some matters, and this is one of them. I am not a schoolgirl. Mother never did understand me, and never will; and I find it impossible to make a friend of

her. She knows it; you know it, father. I wish I had a friend, but in this house I have none except you. And even you, though you mean nothing but kindness, cannot save me from my mother's mistaken—'

'Marian, where did you learn such extraordinary principles? You must be out of your mind. An English girl can have no better friend than her mother.'

'And sometimes no worse,' broke in the young lady. 'If I shock you, I cannot help it, father. I may as well say what I am always thinking. Look at what has happened to-day. Charlie Latimer, with whom I am on the terms usual between cousins, and in whom I feel no interest whatever, chooses to confide—if you will have it so—in my discretion, and straightway I must have mother in my room, scolding, browbeating and making a prisoner of me.'

'Charlie is to blame,' said the Vicar. 'Why did he not consult Emmeline rather than you?'

'Did you ever know anyone consult Emmeline, father? I wish he had. And I wish I could get somewhere away from Rylsford. Can't you put an end to all this? Advertise me as a lady's companion, or French teacher —anything to put me where I shall not be quarrelling with mother and hurting your feelings every day.'

Mr Greystoke shook his head, 'I'm afraid it is out of the question. What would people say when they saw my daughter in a dependent position?'

'Let them say what they choose. I am not exactly in an independent one now.' She spoke petulantly; but even petulance seemed to add to her beauty. The Vicar remarked it.

'You have gifts which are wasted here,' he said, in his rich and melancholy tones. 'But I can do nothing. You see I can't.'

'Then I must act for myself,' she answered quickly. 'I have been thinking the matter out, and I want to go up to London.'

'To London?' he echoed. 'Why—how—where? It is impossible.'

'No, father. I can sell one or two trinkets which are my own property; that will pay my fare, and keep me till I get a situation.' She uttered the last word scornfully. 'And I have a friend to stay with.'

'You have?' he inquired with a touch of sarcasm. 'Pray who may that be.'

'It is Lizzie Raby,' she answered.

'And who is Lizzie Raby, if you please?'

'You have heard me speak of her. She taught French at Miss Jerome's for two years. She is my best friend; older than I am, of course.'

Her father thought for a moment. 'I remember,' he said gravely. 'Do you mean the person who disgraced herself by attending the medical schools in Paris and taking a doctor's degree?'

'That person, father. But how was her conduct disgraceful?'

'Shocking, immodest, unwomanly! And so you would like to join her in town?'

'She has asked me often to come and see her. She is perfectly respectable, I assure you, father. I don't intend to be a doctor,' said Marian, smiling grimly; 'the life would not agree with me. But she has a large and fashionable connection, she tells me, and perhaps with her help I needn't advertise.'

'But,' said the Vicar, moving uneasily in his chair, 'why not stay at home? I shall not always be straitened for means, as I am now. Here is one of the most promising things I ever took up,' laying his hand on a set of coloured maps and papers which strewed the table—'ruby mines in Burma. Young Stukeley, I hear, has made five-and-forty thousand pounds out of them already.'

'And you—oh, poor, dear father! you are sure to lose if you touch them. Does mother know?'

'I have just broached the subject. She seems unwilling as yet—'

'May she always be so! Rubies in Burma! If I were a man, I could shoulder a pickaxe and go off to the diggings. As I am only a woman, I must think of

some other scheme. Let me go to Miss Raby, father. Stay at home I will not. It is suicide.'

They argued the matter a little. Except on the point of Stock Exchange gambling, Mr Greystoke was conventional in the extreme. A female doctor was appalling in his eyes; she was worse than a female preacher; yet he felt weak in the presence of a resolution such as was now showing itself in this proud and beautiful creature. 'We will go by what your mother says,' he remarked feebly at last.

'Not I,' replied Marian, with quiet decision. 'You know what mother is. If I cannot do the thing in one way, I will in another. I give you fair warning, father,' she concluded, smiling, but in a resolute voice.

It was decided. The Vicar told his wife that Marian was going for a fortnight to Miss Raby. She held up her hands. 'Going to the notorious Doctor Elizabeth Raby, whose shameless conduct has made such a stir in the newspapers—a woman practitioner? And her father approves! The man of sin is indeed at the doors!'

'But I can't do otherwise, Rachel,' answered the Vicar. 'Marian has put her foot down in the most unexpected way.'

'Put her foot down, Mr Greystoke? If I were allowed to deal with the wilful girl, I would put her feet in the stocks. Who knows but Mrs Doctor Raby is an atheist? They all are, these foolish daughters, with their certificates and their examinations, and dressing themselves in men's clothes.'

'I don't suppose Miss Raby does that. She taught at Miss Jerome's, you know, my dear; she must have been a member of the Church of England then.'

'But what is she now? What does Marian say?'

'Marian doesn't know. She couldn't be less of a Christian than Marian herself, I fear.'

'And therefore you let the child go to her. Well, Mr Greystoke, I wash my hands of it. Charlie Latimer, too? What business had he with Marian? You asked her?'

'Certainly not, my dear. She implied that it was a matter of confidence.' The Vicaress was dumfounded.

Meanwhile, the young lady herself sat upstairs, writing her note to Elizabeth, and when she had seen that posted, she began, with a high sense of adventure, to gather up all her little properties, including, as she thought by what the lawyers call a right of accession, the manuscripts of General Louis Greystoke, still wrapped in their purple shroud. To them she added Jasmin's portrait, and a curious Oriental dagger in a chased sheath, which was among the articles cast away in the loft. She had a notion that it must be the dagger which ended Mansur on that eventful night under the palm trees. Her packing was not extensive. Had she not been in mourning, the sad condition of her coloured frocks would have kept her at home. It was with a tyrannical sense of exasperation she flung them on one side.

In three days, the fly—*currus a non currendo*, such as are kept in Rylsford—stood at the door, which was to take her into Fairyland—rather a forlorn equipage for a Princess on her travels. Mrs Greystoke gave and received the coldest of kisses. Emmeline wanted Marian to finish her share of work for the bazaar while she was in London; and Marian put the parcel back which had been made up for her with an odd expression, not altogether benevolent. But the next moment she was straining Rosie to her heart. 'Oh, Rosie, I am—I am sorry to go—for your sake, my pet. Will you keep well? And not read too many of those dark little books? And write to me often?' They had forgotten every one else in their warm embrace.

'We shall miss the train,' said her father, who was going up to spy out this formidable Miss Raby.

Marian was still caressing her little sister. 'I will bring you a heap of nice story books, and a doll as big as yourself, Rosie. You don't care for dolls?—anything you ask, dear; only write and tell me.'

Rosie was the last she saw at the garden gate, the child's eyes looking wistfully after her. And the fly

lumbered along; and the captive released gave a farewell, but not a lingering, glance towards the brazen tower. 'Only a fortnight,' she meditated, letting the window down and drinking in the sunshine; 'if I cannot make it a month, three months, a year, now I have got the key of the fields, I shall deserve to come back for good to my Castle of Giant Despair—and to my mother.'

In the train Marian and her father had a carriage to themselves. Mr Greystoke read his share list and his mining prospectuses, but said little, as was his wont. Suddenly breaking the silence, Marian asked him, 'Father, did you ever read the *Memoirs* of Louis—of General Greystoke—our French ancestor?'

'Memoirs? I never knew that he had left any,' said the clergyman, looking up vaguely from his financial dream.

'Didn't he?' said Marian, with an uncomfortable feeling. 'I thought—I fancied— But his life was a very romantic one, was it not?'

'Travellers' tales,' returned the Vicar. 'He had seen service in the East, with some native Prince—Indian, Persian, I can't be sure which. And he married out there.'

'A chieftain's daughter, didn't they say?'

'You know more about it than I do. He certainly married; and I fear it was a slave girl, and a heathen into the bargain. Louis Greystoke is the black sheep of the family. We are rather proud of his having been guillotined during the French Revolution, of course. But we are not proud of the negro damsel. Don't introduce her to your friends, Marian. Happily, my grandfather, who settled us at home once more, married a decent wife, and gave up his French Papistical notions. We are quite English, remember.'

'And you think nothing wonderful ever happened to Louis?'

'Nothing except getting his head cut off.'

That would be dreadfully disappointing, and Marian could not believe it. The romance of Ilsamin had sunk

deep into her heart. She kept it there as a sacred, hidden story which was all her own ; and the '*Memoirs*,' she said to herself, should henceforth travel where she travelled. It made her indignant to feel that this brave and tender Louis had been utterly disfigured in the commonplace tradition of their house.

They were out of the train, had taken a hansom, and were now stopping at the gate of a trim little garden on the downward slope of Notting Hill, at no great distance from Holland House. A tiny gabled cottage peeped up between three or four lofty elms ; and no sooner had they rung, than a bright-looking woman came hurrying down the path and took Marian's two hands into her own. 'My dear Malkin,' cried a ringing, cheery voice, 'how good of you to come! Should I have known you? The eyes, my dear—yes, and the mouth! But you *were* a girl ; you are—let me look at you'—stepping back, 'you are Norma, Velléda, a prima donna or a Druidess —perhaps both. Excuse me, Mr Greystoke, I am so delighted at your bringing me my child! Six years, and at her age—an eternity!'

Mr Greystoke would have bowed, but the lady offered him her hand in the friendliest manner, and he felt it close with a firm grasp on his own.

'Come in! come in!' she continued, leading the way. 'Adèle will pay the cabman and see to the luggage.'

'You are very kind,' said the Vicar, somewhat stiffly, 'but I regret to say that I must go on to my lawyer's, with whom I have an appointment. I fear there is hardly time—'

'When is your appointment?' inquired Miss Raby, holding Marian's hand while she spoke, and still examining her with a piercing glance.

'At half-past two.'

'Then you will have time to lunch and to get there easily, unless it is outside the four-mile radius.'

It was no farther than the Albany.

'Good! the matter is settled. Pay the man, Adèle, and lay for three.'

And the matter was settled, though Mr Greystoke had not intended to do more than see this dangerous woman, that he might take back a report of the land. He scrupled at eating salt with her, so to speak, and then being obliged to describe her unfavourably. Had he not declined her invitation beforehand in Marian's letter? She seemed unaware of it.

They entered the drawing-room, which peeped through the elm trees into a corner of Holland Park.

'You have a pretty look-out,' said the Vicar, civilly, as he stood by the window.

'Yes, especially towards evening, when the lights are level in the Park. That made me take the house,' returned Miss Raby. 'It is quite a toy-house, Marian, you will find.'

'With plenty of toys in it,' said Marian, looking round at the decoration of the room, the bits of bronze, the engravings, and the delicate china hung all about. How different from Rylsford, so dim and desolate! In spite of the elms, there was excellent light in the room.

'I often see my patients here,' Miss Raby said, 'and I like them to have a bright outlook; colour and light and fresh air help them more than they suspect. It is a mistake, because people are suffering, to make their surroundings gloomy. Sadness is no cure for any complaint, mental or physical.'

'Not even for moral deficiencies?' inquired the Vicar, as he turned from the window.

Miss Raby gave him a shrewd glance. 'I don't presume to dogmatise in the presence of a clergyman,' she said modestly, 'but, if you ask me—no, not even for disease of that sort. Life—life is what we want. Sadness means a slower circulation and an irregular pulse, signs of decreased vitality. Your cheerful man—and much more your cheerful woman—is the true moral being. Feed misery, and you feed all that is unwholesome. But I am only a doctor, not a clergyman. I speak professionally.'

'Quite so,' said Mr Greystoke, declining argument.

But cheerful views of life had been always denounced, both to him and by him, as no better that 'carnal service.' Marian, on the other hand, was struck.

'I like your worship of health and brightness,' she said to Miss Raby, as they went across to the dining-room, which was on the same floor; 'but how if you cannot get the colour? Some lives are as dull as ditchwater.'

'Did you ever look at ditchwater through a microscope?' answered Miss Raby, unfolding her napkin; 'there is glorious life in the least drop of it. Mr Greystoke, do you mind carving for yourself and Marian? I never touch meat. Adèle, put the dish in front of Mr Greystoke. Now you must eat, and I will talk. My luncheon is only a pretence. Two good meals a-day —one about nine, the other not later than seven— are enough for me, when I can get them!'

'How long have you been practising?' asked the Vicar. He was beginning to like Miss Raby, but found himself uncertain whether to address her as a man or a woman. Her tone of voice and the style of her remarks were certainly, he thought, masculine. But she did not look so. On the contrary, in her make and expression he would have said there was something maternal. By the side of Marian she looked plain. Yet she was far from ill-featured. Her dark, intelligent eyes harmonised well with the short, curly hair, like a boy's, which fell in ringlets round a finely-poised head and on an ample forehead. Her throat was bare, and the unadorned dress, of some tinge of olive, with its short sleeves and belt, gave her a strange but not unpleasant appearance, as if she had come down out of a picture in the National Gallery. Her lips were full and red, her cheeks rather pale, and the hand which she laid on the table was one of the finest and whitest he had ever seen. What an extraordinary medley, he said to himself, of artist and doctor!

'How long? Not much more than a year,' she said, in answer to his question. I lost no time in Paris,

thank God! My examiners were very good-natured, or I was very lucky.'

'Miss Raby knows everything, we used to say at Limbeck,' remarked Marian; 'no wonder the examiners were civil.'

'Not quite everything, my dear. I studied eight hours a-day when I was abroad, and it was none too much. But I was a country doctor's niece, and always had a hankering to follow the profession. Moreover, women don't waste time like young men.'

'Indeed!' said the Vicar; 'then you look on women as the more serious part of creation? That is a new view.'

'It is new to the men,' returned Miss Raby, smiling; 'but if lions painted lions, you know— The painting has all been done by men, who have never yet taken our sex seriously. I am not speaking of fashionable women, to be sure. They are a caste apart, whether as maids, wives, or mothers. But a working woman is much more in earnest, much steadier, than the average man.'

'What else can she be?' said Marian. 'She has no amusements and no money. Steady? I should think she would be as steady as a cow in a field.'

'Have you much practice among the class of which you speak—the working-men's wives and daughters?' asked Mr Greystoke.

'I couldn't live by it, or I should prefer it to any other,' Miss Raby answered. 'Oh, yes, as much as I can take, especially on Sundays.'

'On Sundays?' echoed the clergyman, in a doubtful tone.

'Are you surprised?' she said, glancing up at him. 'Sunday is the only free time many of them can get. They cannot afford to lose half a day's wages. There is good authority, I believe, for healing on the Sabbath day, is there not, sir?'

'Oh, why, yes,' he replied, in some confusion; 'certainly if you put it on that ground. But there is danger in applying precedents from inspired writings— great danger.'

'So everybody tells me,' said his hostess, drily, 'though I should have supposed there was still greater danger in not applying them.'

'But can you get to church if you are so busy in your consulting-room?' the Vicar asked. He had somehow lost his bearings in these latitudes.

'I attend Evensong when I am free, which is pretty often at some seasons of the year. But when I am hindered, I try to look on what I am doing as divine service. That was my father's principle. But I hear your cab, Mr Greystoke. You must go? Could you come back to dinner? I should be delighted.'

'I return to Rylsford this evening, thank you,' he answered, with a polite inclination of the head. Miss Raby was no infidel, at all events. In fact, he rather approved of her. But she had sat on the same benches with Parisian medical students. That was truly shocking. Who could tell what she had gone through? It was an age of contradictions—women doctors, and Christians coming to be healed on Sundays. Strange, strange!

The door shut on him, and Marian, fond as she was of her father, gave a sigh of relief.

'Now my holiday is beginning,' she thought, and aloud to Miss Raby, 'What can you do to amuse me? I am Cinderella and I have run away from the kitchen fender. Is there no palace we can break into, no dance music we can hear? I feel as thirsty for enjoyment as a child at a fair, with nothing in its pockets and all the swings going round.'

'Poor dear, how I pity you! Why didn't you come before? London is not very gay at present. However, I have arranged a little programme for this evening. When we have dined, if you are not tired, we will look in at Miss Harland's.'

'Miss Harland? Any relation of Mr Lucas Harland, the late member for Brancepeth?'

'His sister.'

'Really? Mr Harland—but perhaps you know—has taken Heathcote Hall, and we are expecting re-

markable doings when he comes. It appears that he wishes to conciliate the voters of our neighbourhood, who are important to him though to nobody else.'

'Yes, I know; and I thought you would like to make their acquaintance. Miss Harland is a patient of mine, an uncommon sort of person, but very amiable. She is a medium, well known in certain private mesmeric sets. Not in public, of course.'

'Have you any faith in mesmerism?' inquired Marian, languidly, as they were walking by-and-by in Kensington Gardens. It was a lovely afternoon, and a leaf came fluttering slowly now and then to the ground in the windless air.

'That is a long story,' replied her friend. 'Should you like to test Miss Harland's powers?'

'What! let her put me to sleep, or at least try? No, thank you! I should look too foolish sitting in a great arm-chair while an old lady made passes at me.'

'She is not an old lady, unless I am one,' broke out Miss Raby, laughing; 'her age may be five-and-thirty, some four years younger than Mr Harland. As for putting you to sleep, that is not necessary. Some of the most interesting experiments are made, not on persons but with inanimate objects. It is part of her profession to discover, by touching a ring, or book, or handkerchief—anything, in short, which has come in contact with a human being—what the person is like, or something he has done.'

'And do you believe she can? Have you seen her do it?'

'I am very hard of belief, my dear Marian, though quite willing to make experiments and see them made. Miss Harland has the gift—the knack, if you like to call it so—of hitting off the characteristics of people to whom the objects belong with extraordinary power. But whether it is memory or divination I don't pretend to say. Fortune-tellers I have met who did the same, but never quite so accurately. It may be a power of guessing; some people have it.'

Marian was not curious on the subject; but as she

had come to town in quest of amusement, she returned to it at dinner.

'Where do the Harlands live?' she asked.

'In one of those great houses in Fenimore Place,' answered Miss Raby; 'I might have shown it you when we were walking. Mr Harland is enormously rich, and has bought the lease, which must have cost him a small fortune.'

'Ah!' said Marian, 'I can fancy the kind of house. But do we meet him to-night?'

'He has not come back from Egypt, I understand. Miss Harland will probably be alone. She dabbles in science a little, and likes talking with me about her *spécialité*. We won't bore you this evening; I will take care of that.'

'I was thinking,' Marian went on, 'of an experiment I should like to try, just for the fun of the thing. You say she answers questions after feeling objects—objects that belong to living people?'

'Or dead,' said Dr Raby; 'try which you please.'

'How very uncomfortable!' said Marian.

The room into which they entered, about nine that evening, looked very large and solitary, with the lights shaded, vast curtains drawn sweeping the ground, mirrors multiplying dim effects, and lines of gold gleaming above dark red flowers in vases. A fire burned brilliantly with a quiet, satisfied crackling, at the farther end, which seemed a long way off. And on a low easy-chair, in one spot of shadow, reclined, with a hand hanging by her side negligently, the lady of the house, Miss Letitia Harland. She turned her head on seeing them, but did not rise.

'Are you better this evening?' inquired Miss Raby, taking the hand which was hanging down.

'I have been lying as you find me since luncheon.'

'Any pain?'

'No; general weakness, lassitude, prostration, head clear, no fainting. But make me known to your friend.'

'This is my old school friend, Miss Greystoke,' said the Doctor, as Marian, who had been standing in the shade, came forward. The invalid put out a skeleton hand. It was deadly white and thin, most unlike the warm, rosy palm in which it lay for a moment.

'The Greystokes of Curras?' said Miss Harland, looking up with quick admiration at the face bending towards her.

'They are our younger cousins,' replied Marian, answering her look and smiling. 'Ours is the Jacobite branch, *émigré* after the battle of Preston. Lord Curras took the other side, and stayed in England with the estate.'

'Ah, yes, I have read the story. And your father is Vicar of Heathcote?'

'Of Rylsford, which is the old parish church.'

'Tell me about the place.' Miss Raby was assisting her to sit up as she spoke.

'What did you call it?' said Marian, turning to her friend. 'Sleepy Hollow? It is a place where nothing ever happens.'

'However, people live there,' remarked Miss Harland, musingly.

'Life in death,' said the Doctor.

'Yes,' said Marian; 'the gentlemen sleep, or follow the hounds when they are not sleeping. The women yawn over their Berlin wools, and drive out on fine afternoons.'

'And the girls?' inquired Miss Harland, still looking towards Marian, now seated in front of her. 'What do the girls make of Sleepy Hollow?'

'The spirited ones run away,' answered Marian, in whose mind a rapid calculation was going on as to Miss Harland's history.

She looked forty at least, and she might once have been handsome. Her face was pinched, bloodless, as white as parchment; her hair touched with grey and scanty, her lips dry. In her eyes, which were unusually large and transparent, a fire glowered, ready to sparkle out into brilliant light. The figure, spare and small in

its floating draperies, seemed diaphanous, like a butterfly's wings.

'You must not imagine me always a cripple,' she said cheerfully. 'There are days when I walk without support, though never any distance. I am content so long as I know what I am doing. My great trial is—did you ever feel as if the top of your head were open, and a flood of light pouring into it? No, you are too sensible, my dear. I see it in your looks. The sensation is very extraordinary, very unsteadying; not painful in the least. As if one were dissolving into light, into ether. Miss Raby may explain it better than I can.'

'Not explain,' said Miss Raby, fixing her eyes on the patient with a warning expression, 'but more or less account for, if we were in a lecture-room.'

'Is it mesmeric?' inquired Marian, hoping to get away from the subject. Mesmerism seemed to be the nearest gate open.

'Quite the contrary,' was Miss Harland's reply. 'When I am mesmerised I fall asleep and dream of nothing, neither of light nor of darkness. But this I should compare to opening a shaft in the brain.'

'*Apropos*,' said Miss Raby, 'there is a little experiment I want you to make. Do you feel tired?'

'Not in that way. But won't Miss Greystoke be shocked if we tamper with a forbidden art? A clergyman's daughter?'

Marian's lip curled.

'Clergymen's daughters,' she said, 'are what the French call "children of the house."'

'And not afraid of Satan, therefore,' said Miss Harland. 'I don't doubt myself that, two hundred years ago, I should have been burnt as a witch, and on satisfactory evidence. It is true that I don't ride through the air on a broomstick, or fly away on May Eve to the Blocksberg, or "lodge" anyone's corn. But I do many things that only witches could do, or are known to have done.'

'Such as?'

'Such as seeing what is happening at a distance, and foretelling the future. You laugh. Quite right, my dear Miss Greystoke; why shouldn't you, if I only say and don't prove. When I began, in my Evangelical days, I was just as sceptical as you are. No one could be more surprised than I on discovering that I had this endowment.'

'How did you first come to know of it?' Marian asked.

'In a way not easily forgotten. Miss Raby has heard the story, but it is soon told. My brother and I —we lost our parents when we were quite young, and have always lived under one roof—had arranged to go down to some friends in the north, and were to set out by the 10.10 from Euston. I was sitting alone in the drawing-room after breakfast, when a most decided feeling came over me—I can compare it to nothing so much as a conviction formed previously, and now all at once recalled—that we must not go by that train. I stood up, meaning to find Mr Harland and tell him so; but the change of plan seemed so absurd, that I tried to shake off the impression, and sat down again to the book I had been reading. It was of no avail; there in my mind the conviction rested that we ought to give up the 10.10 from Euston. I yielded at last, though ashamed of myself, told my brother, and persuaded him to take the 12.30 from King's Cross instead. We did so, and on opening the *Times* next morning at breakfast with our host, the first news we saw was that the 10.10 had been thrown off the line and wrecked; that a second train had run into it, setting some of the carriages on fire, and that more than eighty passengers had been killed or wounded.'

'No, you could not well forget that hand out of the cloud,' said Marian, who had listened attentively. 'Was it the beginning of more wonders?'

'Yes, it made me watch and observe. Things are full of signals, if we keep our eyes open. It may be hard to understand them; one may blunder fifty times, yet be right the fifty-first. I found that, as my

illness went on getting worse, I had a quicker perception of those slight clues and changes that forebode events. We live in a thick fog which sometimes lifts a corner and discloses, it may be, a reef of rocks towards which we are steering, or the smooth waters of the haven shining ahead. And the eyes of some are so much sharper than those of others. There have always been seers among mankind—born so, in spite of themselves; men, or perhaps oftener women, "feeling about in worlds not realised."'

'Good,' interposed Miss Raby; 'now for the experiment. Lie back in your chair, Miss Harland, whilst I wheel it into the light. You see, Marian, I take the lady's hand in mine, and by a wish I send her to sleep. I have so often mesmerised her that it requires no effort.'

Marian was startled. Miss Harland's countenance, a moment ago animated with expression, though colourless, had become a mask, rigid as death. The lips were closed, the head thrown back as in a profound sleep. But the most extraordinary, the least pleasant change was in the large, lustrous eyes. They remained wide open; but, though under the influence of a concentrated glow from the lamp, not an eyelash quivered. Yet even this was not the peculiarity that shocked Marian and gave her a slight feeling as of nausea. It was that *the light in the eyes had suddenly gone out.* You could not quench a candle more instantaneously. The effect was like seeing the fire recede all at once from a volcano mouth, leaving it dark and yawning. To glare with dead eyes! It was that; nothing less. There was no speculation in them, no reason, but only a Medusa-like coldness, and the pupils had almost disappeared.

'How very horrible!' said Marian, under her breath, turning away. She could not doubt that Miss Harland was blind to the sights of the outer world. Previously, she would have said it was all a piece of acting, prearranged. But how should living eyes so utterly lose their expression and gaze on vacancy? It was no deception. It was ghastly and real.

She had put her sealed packet into Miss Raby's hands, with an injunction to leave it, as they entered, in some spot where the clairvoyante was to find it, and to say what she knew of its contents. The Doctor had assented, without mentioning that her patient was subject to bad attacks of rheumatism, in which state she could not move out of her chair. 'Impossible,' thought Marian now, 'that she should attempt such a thing.' But, even as the words passed through her mind, she beheld the invalid slowly rise and stand on her feet. Miss Raby held her hand, but neither spoke nor moved. Marian, it must be confessed, though a girl of some nerve, held her breath in expectation of what was coming. Without a moment's pause, the somnambulist, dragging Miss Raby along with her, walked, or rather glided at an even pace down the room, till she stopped at an ebony table, on which lay a number of objects confusedly. She seemed to be searching among them. In a little while she came back to the light, holding in her hand a small, square packet which Marian recognised. Then she opened it, took out a dagger which was wrapped up within, and sat down, as if to examine it.

'Tell me what you are seeing,' said Miss Raby, standing close to her chair.

The sleeper did not reply at once. Her features worked anxiously, and took on an appearance of deep thought. After several minutes, pausing like one who had to decipher a badly-written manuscript, she said, in a low, rather guttural accent, unlike her previous high-pitched tones,—

'There is a broad, dark stream—it is night, and the stars shine brilliantly. I see men standing—under some tall trees—palm trees, in a grove. The men wear long dresses, not European—and their arms glitter. They do not speak. It is very still. I hear the water plashing on the bank. Now it grows more restless—a boat is coming, coming fast, with smoky lights, and many oars. It stops. I see a man, large, burly, loud, talking in some language not intelligible to me. His face is quite black, and his eyes gleam as he steps out

of the boat. He is pulling someone along—a girl. Ah! the men are all about him, scuffling, fighting. And the girl has seized a dagger from one of them—this dagger. She strikes the negro dead with it. There is blood trickling down the haft. I feel it on my fingers. Ah! take it away. Let me wash my hands clean.'

As she flings the weapon from her, Miss Raby and Marian looking on with equal astonishment, the door opens, and a gentleman in evening dress comes into the room.

CHAPTER VII

THE MARKET OF WOMEN

IT was a striking situation. Under the full glare of a lamp sat Miss Harland, leaning forward a little, in the energetic attitude of one who has cast aside some loathsome object. The Doctor, intently watching her patient, was bending down to feel the pulse in that trembling hand. But Marian had started back, her eyes lifted in amazement, her hands drawn apart, and the beauty of her face shone in exquisite relief, as though in a cameo—but glowing dark with the richness of the purple tulip—above her white collar and mourning costume. There was an instant during which the four actors in this meeting remained quite motionless. Then the gentleman came up to the lamp, his steps hurried, but unheard upon the thick pile over which he was treading.

As he entered the circle of light, Marian perceived a man of some five feet ten or eleven, with square shoulders, and a head well set on them, a face rather flushed, dark whiskers, and crisp, abundant hair, of the colour which is called in French *gris cendré*. The eyes were long, very piercing, and glanced to and fro with an uneasy motion. While the lips smiled as if smiling were natural to them, the heavy colour of the cheek seemed to denote a vexation which was not to be allowed its own way. Their eyes met; and the smile spread over the gentleman's countenance.

He bowed. Miss Raby motioned him to be still, and laid her firm, plump hand upon the sleeping lady,

who turned towards her, sighed two or three times, moved restlessly about, and at length fell back in her chair, with her eyes open and a meaning in them.

'Ah, Miss Greystoke,' she said, 'I was telling you how I came to be a medium. Shall I go on? Are you interested?'

'Good evening, Letitia,' said her brother, taking her by the hand; 'is this another *séance* which I have interrupted?'

She glanced at him inquiringly. 'I thought you were in Egypt.'

'So I was till Lord Wootton telegraphed for me. I have been travelling ever since; reached town this morning, spent the day and dined with him, and must go back in an hour. I merely looked in. Will you introduce me?'

'Miss Greystoke, this is my brother Lucas. Our Vicar's daughter at Heathcote, Lucas.'

'Oh, I am very glad,' said Mr Harland, smiling again. He had a beautiful mouth, and an expression of great sweetness, which his strong, masculine voice somehow lessened; perhaps he spoke too loud. And his manner, little as Marian had seen of it, was peremptory, she thought.

'Well, now you have made your experiment, are you satisfied?' said Miss Raby to her friend.

'What experiment?' asked Letitia, languidly. The girl turned to her in great wonder.

'Don't you know that you have been describing a strange scene to me,' said Marian, 'as if it were before your eyes?'

'Not the least in the world. What is that lying on the floor? A handkerchief?'

'It is mine,' said the other, picking up in some confusion the kerchief and the dagger she had brought. 'I am—not satisfied—but in a state of bewilderment,' answering Mr Harland's amused attention with a slight smile. 'You have told me the story, which I believe to be a true one.'

'Then you ought to pay for the performance, Miss

Greystoke,' said Lucas, gaily; 'or are you a rival conjuror?'

'You must sing something,' observed the Doctor, in an undertone, 'it will soothe Miss Harland's nerves.'

Marian had no affectation. 'With pleasure,' said she. 'But what can I sing?'

'Sing "*Feuilles d'Automne*"; I liked it extremely this afternoon when you gave it on my piano. Here is a divine instrument. Miss Greystoke,' she went on, turning to Lucas, who was observing this by-play closely, 'has had good masters, and will charm even you, Mr Harland, who have heard every great singer in Europe.'

'Delighted!' in a conventional tone, as he led Marian to the music-stool. Mr Harland could admire a beautiful young woman before she had opened her mouth. *Après?* He was not so sure; English girls sang detestably.

'*Feuilles d'Automne*' was a setting of the delicate, dreamy canzonet by Verlaine, which many have thought mere woven air and light, tender as an October sunset—the nonpareil of French lyric poesy. Marian had been taught it, curiously enough, at Limbeck, and had sung it in her lonely hours, stealing into the church at Rylsford and accompanying herself on the organ, with Rosie for the organ-blower. Now she was back again in solitude, forgetful of the audience that sat a long way off, where she could not see them. Her sure touch awakened a thrill in herself as the instrument responded to the prelusive chords, faint and almost timid—a memory which dawns out of the dark, not uncertain, but obscure. Gradually reminiscence grows distinct; the feeling of delicious autumn—sad, ghostly, exquisite, as it was long ago, brings up the evanescent imagery of old time—the shaded walks, and wind-swept yellow leaves—the ladies in their dainty dresses, moving negligently in gardens dear to Watteau, under large boughs, the castle windows giving out a leaden, silvery gleam; and, as the breeze floats by, there is a sobbing of the violins which somewhere, above or away at a

great distance, are dreaming their autumnal reveries, each to its own spirit—an aerial meditation, sweet as the wind in a shell.

They listen; but Marian is attending to her long, long thoughts, and she plays and sings to the vanished years, so mournful with their poignant memories—an autumn that never had a spring, but was always strangely desolate, and now put on the colours of romance, inhabited by the phantom ladies with their cavaliers, who strolled about these dream-paths, fantastic visions, yet not unreal. And they were all her youth. As they flitted along with the music and the driven leaves, her voice wept over them—a clear, melodious weeping, like rain upon a quiet stream, where the drops turn to flashes of diamond. The music ended as it began—most faint as from excess of regret and longing; it went out in an intense stillness.

And then Mr Harland came, and their eyes met once more. He did not utter a word. Marian, who had now gone into *her* mesmeric trance, was not thinking of him. Still she saw, as in a departing vision, the dames and squires of her sentimental landscape, and the violins were sobbing. But he—if he was mesmerised, the vision came closer to his side.

'Whose setting did you say it was?' inquired Miss Raby of Marian.

Lucas broke in with a radiant laugh. 'As if it could be anyone's but the master's!' he exclaimed. 'My dear Miss Raby, there is only one Gerard Elven.'

'Yes, I remember now; Gerard Elven—how stupid of me! But I am not very musical, you know. Music refreshes me wonderfully; styles and schools I leave to you melomaniacs.'

'Who was your teacher, Miss Greystoke?' inquired Harland. 'Surely I have known something of that manner—I don't mean that it is an imitation. It is most original, most moving.' He looked his enthusiasm while he spoke.

'Our old master at Limbeck was named Morosini.'

At the sound Miss Harland started in her chair, sat up, and, glancing towards her brother, flushed delicately.

'Morosini? Of course, of course. A marvellous old man. And he taught you? At school? A country school! Excuse me, *you* were there; but who else? Poor old Morosini! I knew him well—years ago. A splendid musician; but he gambled; went wrong; we had to dismiss him.'

'He was once connccted with the Italian Opera, we were told,' said Marian.

'Yes, yes, the Italian Opera. So was I, and I did my best for him; I had a good deal of interest with Appleton. But no use; he came to grief. And so you are a pupil of his! Wonderful—isn't it, Letitia?'

'It has been a tonic to me,' said Miss Harland, recovering, but still with timid looks. 'I feel another woman. See, I can walk across the room.' She did so, and approached Marian. 'Are not these miracles? You will come again, won't you, Miss Greystoke? To-morrow? Come to luncheon, and play for me.'

'To-morrow we are—shopping, I think,' answered Miss Raby.

'Shall we say Saturday, then? I would send the carriage to Hillside Terrace at one o'clock. Do come, both of you.'

'*I* am doubtful,' said the Doctor, 'but you would like it, Marian?'

'I should like it,' answered Marian. So it was arranged.

When they were gone, Lucas Harland did not leave his sister at once. He moved about the room, stood looking out at the row of lights which were visible like so many winking red eyes in the Park, just across from their windows, and fingered the piano softly, going over some of the chords that tingled along his nerves. 'Astonishing Gerard Elven,' he said to himself.

What was that girl's name, Letitia?' he asked.

'Marian Greystoke,' replied Miss Harland.

'Ah, Marian—Marian Greystoke! Well, good-night, my dear! I must be seeing Lord Wootton.'

On Saturday, at two o'clock, Marian was seated in the magnificent dining-room—blue and silver, with a ceiling which reproduced the Aurora of the Rospigliosi Palace in Rome—alone with the brother and sister, both amiable, and Mr Harland still under the charm of her singing. It was a simple luncheon, in every detail so artistically devised, from the China roses which adorned the table to the frail biscuit-ware out of which coffee was served, that its effect on Miss Greystoke's imagination was of a rare something she had never hitherto experienced. The simple might then be the luxurious ; she had always known that by instinct ; now she saw and admired it. And when she recalled her Monday's untasted meal of bread, cheese and milk, the contrast was exhilarating. In her own language she went on saying, ' I accept the omen.' Afterwards they moved into the drawing-room, which, two evenings before, she had hardly taken in under its shaded lights. It was a vast piece, decorated as if one of the far-famed temples at Nikko—yellow silks, curiously brocaded, forming a tapestry for the walls, the furniture in crimson lacquer, the massive ceiling red and gold. Here and there stood precious monsters, screens with golden birds wrought upon them, and vases in which grew single flowers. There was no overcrowding of ornaments or confusion of styles—one rich but uniform impression prevailed, and a sacred, a hushed silence. The fascination of immense wealth took a sudden hold of Marian.

But she had her own talent ; and the consciousness of Mr Harland hovering round, treating her with distinction as one that needed no complimentary phrases, merely asking which of the pile of music lying in front of her she would choose, and speechless while she sang—absorbed herself and therefore keenly sensitive to the least interruption—that feeling did, once for all, open the barred gate which had shut her away from the golden, perfumed world ; she seemed to be chanting an accompaniment to her own triumph. Miss Harland lay still, with closed eyes. When the musician stopped, she would entreat, ' Pray go on ; it is water to thirsty lips.

You cannot tell what good you are doing me.' The gentleman did not even say so much. But he was sunk in an abyss of pleasurable emotions that floated round him as clouds, light and feathery, abounding in rainbow mists, a thousand melting colours.

At last, during a longer interval, he remarked to his sister, 'Letitia, won't you call on Mrs Hendrik Henshaw this afternoon?'

Marian listened. She knew Mrs Hendrik Henshaw a long while ago, and did not like her. Miss Harland appeared to be reflecting.

'I am not quite certain,' she said, after a while, unclosing her lids, 'that I want to cultivate Mrs Henshaw.'

'*Connu;* but I do. Mrs Henshaw is a power, and I have dealings with one or two just now whom she, and nobody else, can influence. I don't mean Lord Wootton. In fact, it matters nothing whom I mean. Do be amiable; and perhaps Miss Greystoke would go with you by way of reward. Miss Greystoke, are you fond of Japanese drawings?'

'I have never seen any. But we used to be acquainted with Mrs Henshaw. Why has she a double name? The Henshaws stayed at Mintern, five years ago, for the hunting season.'

'So much the better. Persuade Letitia to call. You will have an opportunity of seeing an unrivalled collection of Hokusai's paintings—quite the best in London—*and* Mrs Henshaw. I am doubtful if there is a second Mrs Henshaw in London either.'

They both laughed, and the mesmeric lady in the chair shivered.

'*I* think,' said Miss Harland, emphatically, 'that Mrs Henshaw is a man-eating demon, an incarnation of the plague, and very low in the scale of spiritual existence.'

'Her own opinion, no doubt. Ask her what the fortune-teller said who examined her palm. However, she won't devour you or Miss Greystoke. Please say—now mind, these very words—"Dear Mrs Henshaw, my brother so much wished me to see you in your charm-

ing house, and I have been dying to come." They will be worth a hundred thousand pounds to me.'

'Then I shall leave you to say them yourself, Lucas. However, in broad daylight we can take no harm; and I rave about Hokusai—*j'en raffole.*'

'Teach Miss Greystoke to *raffoler*, likewise, about him. A genius of the highest order,' addressing Marian —'as real as nature, with no waste of means; like Gerard Elven in music!'

They went. It was a longish drive. Mrs Hendrik Henshaw lived much farther west, in a corner which the builders had overlooked; and now the entrance to her secluded garden was a magic door, behind which lay all manner of dainty and dangerous secrets, as yet unexplored by Marian.

When they arrived the afternoon was falling dark. They passed up the broad steps—Miss Harland leaning on her new friend's arm, but walking fairly well—then went the length of a vestibule splendidly lighted with electric lamps, and before them rose the golden staircase for which that house had been celebrated by artists and satirised by economic reformers. It ascended by an easy flight as to some heaven glowing with pure crystalline blue overhead; and on each side flamed an immense mosaic—angels with musical instruments in their hands, great winged creatures fluttering for ever in the precious stone out of which they were carven, or in it eternised, and an infinite garland of roses, many-tinted amid their fresh green leaves—the colour of broken emerald, as Dante would imagine—binding all these phantoms in loose array. The staircase figured a delightful painting which had served it as a sort of cartoon. And up the shining steps they moved slowly, the little, diaphanous figure in its bright draperies and the dark-clad Marian.

'It is extraordinary how much better I feel to-day!' said Miss Harland, clasping her arm.

Some curtains fell asunder before them; but still the azure light was all round; and they had entered unawares a Japanese tea-house, over the polished floor of which men and women were leisurely moving about—not many, but

Marian felt alarmed at her sudden introduction to these unknown. The walls of ebony and ivory were lined with drawings—Hokusai's, no doubt. A lady came forward and took Miss Harland's lifeless fingers between her own with a fervent pressure.

'How good of you to come!' murmured Mrs Henshaw. The tone was gentleness itself, but Marian remembered a sharper key. She had never seen their hostess except in a riding habit. Now Mrs Henshaw wore some trailing splendour of a tea-gown, dark purple from head to foot, and only one sparkle of diamond at her throat. She was not so tall as Miss Greystoke, but slender, serpentine, fair-skinned, with blue eyes made in enamel, as it might seem, and hair of the prevailing fashionable colour, which happened that year to be a tawny brown. Something in her air and movement gave one the notion of a flickering light; she could not keep still, but must be writhing, or twisting, or pulling at her girdle, or clawing the arm of the ivory chair in which she seated herself, with the two ladies in front of her. 'And you are Miss Greystoke?' said she, turning her 'statue eyes' upon Marian.

'No, that is my sister Emmeline,' the girl answered. 'I am the one with pink eyes—the yellow cat, you may remember.'

Mrs Henshaw started a little, writhed in her chair, and laughed softly. 'Yellow cat, pink eyes! Did I—oh, what a tongue I have!' She considered her young visitor attentively. 'How could I tell that you were going to be such a lovely, lovely creature! You forgive me? Do, and come and stay with me. I will make up for my rudeness.' She turned to Miss Harland. 'Is the Pasha at home? You know, Miss Greystoke, we call him the Pasha since that marvellous *coup* in Egyptians. Mr Harland is a prodigy, the greatest financier living. How many Companies does he manage now?'

'I know nothing of his Companies,' answered the little lady. 'All this speculation is odious to me.'

'And I live by it. Art and Speculation—my two hobbies—angel and demon drawing one car. Of course,

my dear child,' to Marian, 'you adore art; you are decadent?'

'Decadent?' said Marian, under her breath. What did Mrs Henshaw mean?' She had never heard the word, and modern literature was a sealed volume to one who lived on eighteenth century French. 'What is decadent?' she asked, as if playing with the subject. She did not intend to betray her ignorance.

'Decadent,' observed a gentleman, tall and stout, who was standing behind Mrs Henshaw's chair, 'is the last exquisite touch of departing life—it is autumn, introspective, melancholy, flushed with the bloom that announces over-ripeness and the sunset. No art which is merely sound has any suggestion of this infinite. You have quite grasped my thought?' smiling languidly down at their hostess.

'I love things to be too luscious and gamy, Mr Vandyke,' returned that lady, twisting round to look up at him. 'You have read Mr Vandyke's last volume on the Beauty of Death?—What is the Latin? to the critic, who coloured slightly at the mention of his book. '*Pulcritudo Mortis*,' he murmured. 'Yes, I always forget. A mystic, medieval treatise, full of strange and daring views. Daring they are, Mr Vandyke, or I shouldn't care for them—quite lawless, but very, very beautiful.'

Marian now resembled her father at Miss Raby's; she had lost her bearings in these unknown latitudes. Miss Harland did not come to her rescue; she scarcely listened, and was perhaps dreaming. By way of getting down to earth again, therefore, the girl said with a conventional air, 'Is Mr Hendrik Henshaw very well?'

Mr Vandyke's languid smile broadened to a lamplight that overspread his somewhat corpulent features. Miss Harland awoke with a gasp. And the serpentine lady laughed outright.

'Really,' she said, 'I am the last person in the world to consult about Mr Henshaw's state of health. Since our little arrangement in Court, we have not seen one another. Not that I mind; but there seems to be an

etiquette which discourages meeting one's divorced partner. And correspondence—but one is so very busy.' She clawed the arm of her chair in a tired attitude.

'I ought to have begged you before now,' said Miss Harland, 'to let us see your collection of Hokusai's, which are so much talked of. May we go round and look at them?'

Marian felt that the ground need not now open and swallow her.

Mr Vandyke will be your guide. But, my dear yellow Princess'—to Marian—'you accept my invitation? Are you staying with Miss Harland? Come to me when she can let you go.'

Miss Harland replied as if a thought were suggested to her of which she had been in search. 'Staying with me? No, but I wish Miss Greystoke could be persuaded to give an invalid her society. How soon do you go down to Rylsford, my dear child?'

'The bazaar at Mintern is in a month. I must be at home for it,' said Marian, bitterly. These heavens which had opened were closing again. She did not like Mrs Henshaw, but she would have dearly loved a sojourn in her Paradise, equivocal as were its charms.

Fortunately—or was it fortunate?—the mention of the bazaar led to a general account of Mr Harland's plans. The great financier was to begin his electoral campaign, on taking possession of Heathcote Hall, by keeping open house during the week of the fancy fair at Mintern—a charitable institution of which he was president already.

'*Tiens!*' exclaimed Mrs Henshaw, 'I have an idea. Why should not we decadents do something to spread civilisation in those parts? They are sunk in heathen darkness. The mahogany age survives round Mintern, Early Victorian horrors. Now, if you would include me in your house-party, Miss Harland—and could we persuade Mr Vandyke!'—with a pleading expression—'the master of pageants, devices, living tapestries, windows made real in flesh and blood, and the most

flamboyant or obscure costumes! Tell the Pasha it is an advertisement he may never hope for a second time. That will fetch him, *n'est-ce pas?*'

The meshes were all round Miss Harland. 'What do you advise?' she inquired helplessly of Marian, who was beginning to comprehend the exact meaning of 'Decadence.' She saw the moving pageants, the live windows, and the ocean of colour descending out of a skiey distance on her dull landscape.

'Advise?' she said, drawing herself up. 'Invite Mrs Henshaw and entreat Mr Vandyke. Our people will be enchanted.'

It was done. But whether for good or ill, none of them certainly knew. Marian Greystoke pulled the strings and the puppets danced. Yes, and perhaps she would have to dance with them, like the wicked sisters in the fairy tale, until she dropped down.

This afternoon decided many lives. In a pleasant, somnambulist fashion, the two ladies, meanwhile, walked slowly along from one drawing of Hokusai's to another, Mr Vandyke cooing his criticisms, estimating schemes of colour, pointing out tender strokes, fugitive yet mellow tones, and stately or comic effects often dashed with horror—the bold, the delicate hand, which was so cunning, so romantic in its realism. A bit of landscape, a line of reeds in the river, a sky that was all a dream, and some fantastic faces—these were the impressions rather than the memories which Marian took away, as they descended the golden steps again, the angels flaming upon them in contrast to the sweet lights and strange beauties of that Eastern poet-painter. A subtle wine was running in her veins, quickening her heart-beats, and the world had grown soft to her touch. Pleasure seemed to be the air of life now—delicious intoxication!

'I ought to have told you, my dear,' said Miss Harland, penitently, during their drive home, 'about Mr Hendrik Henshaw. But I supposed you to know, as girls hear everything nowadays. Pray forgive me.'

'Judging by Mrs Henshaw's answer, there is nothing

to forgive,' said Marian, smiling; 'but—if I may ask—which of them was to blame—the husband or the wife?'

'You ask more than anyone knows. Mr Hendrik Henshaw is an American, of very good family, I believe, wealthy, and rather dissipated for want of an interest in life or a profession. Yes, he used to hunt, but he was not really a sportsman. Mrs Henshaw comes from no one knows where; and she was richer than her husband. I don't think she *is* American—South African, people used to say, and—well, you have seen the lady. They divorced in some Western State—Iowa or Illinois; had no trouble in Court; everything smooth; speeches complimentary on both sides, and, I believe, a divorce breakfast, with Mrs Henshaw's maiden name wreathed round a—what should we call it?—a bride-cake. *He* has married again.'

'And you give it against Mrs Henshaw?'

'Women always do. But I never thought well of her. She is as light as a feather and as unsteady as that jet of gas in the high wind'—they were passing a shop front at the moment, which supplied this comparison. 'Now she talks Decadence. Last year it was all Renaissance and Bianca Capello. What will she do next?'

'Marry Mr Vandyke?' suggested Marian.

'Quite possible, if he were not married already. But do not be taken in by his superfine languor; he is a man of sense—*finesses* too much—but has plenty of judgment. His real name is Browne. Yes, Browne with an *e*. It is a very good name; quite as good as any Dutchman's. Why did he change? He is self-made—of course, much to his credit. Old Mr Browne, his father, was a painter and decorator in the village of Kemerton, where we have some property—so I know the whole story.'

'And is young Mr Browne—but he doesn't look very young—a painter and decorator?'

'Of words, not of pigments, my dear. He has a style which brings him in twelve hundred a year. Brownesque—the only genuine. It fatigues me, I

confess; so much "too bright and good for human nature's daily food." When I read him, my mouth seems full of gold dust.'

'But why Vandyke?'

'His father, innocent man—a bit of a genius, too—had the child christened Vandyke Browne. That was too absurd. The son, on going into literature, turned his name inside out, and put on his visiting cards Browne Vandyke. Then he grew famous by attacking the President of the Royal Academy as a venal vulgarian, who sold his colours to mustard and medicine. And his name shrank to B. Vandyke. Now he has dropped the B. All this comes of not knowing one's Debrett and Burke; for the Brownes are representatives of the King-maker Neville in the female line, and Sir Anthony Browne was Henry VIII.'s standard-bearer. But I forgive Mr Vandyke in consideration of his really marvellous talent for scenic invention. And he is devoted to his father, who still lives at Kemerton, but has given up business. He says that he leaves the brushes and paints to his son now.'

The carriage was to take Marian home to Miss Raby's in time for dinner. Apparently her new friend would not let her go until the last moment. And when they entered the drawing-room at Fenimore Place after their drive, what was the girl's surprise on seeing Mr Harland in a lounging attitude as though he had been waiting for their arrival? He had spoken of a press of business in the City, and of dining at one of his Clubs. But perhaps he had done a rapid as well as a successful stroke. His ruddy countenance was beaming. The eyes, always observant, glowed beneath their shaggy pent-house, and he moved up and down the room, sipping his tea, with a gay expression, which denoted some joyous and masterful mood. When Miss Harland told him, in a rather shame-faced way, that she had been compelled to invite Mrs Hendrik Henshaw for the bazaar, he laughed exorbitantly.

'It was Miss Greystoke's doing,' she said in a faltering voice.

'And how shall we punish Miss Greystoke?' he inquired. 'Insist on her joining the house-party too? Will you be a lightning-conductor and ward off Mrs Henshaw's fatal attraction?' to Marian.

'You are saying just what I wanted to say all the afternoon, Lucas,' interposed his sister; 'but I mean something more. You know how much my health depends on those I am with. Now, my dear Miss Greystoke, I assure you no one has ever brought such an exhilarating atmosphere about me as you have done. I am well, I feel quite myself, so long as you are at hand. No, no, it is not my fancy. Or, suppose it were, if fancy can work these wonders, why prevent it?'

Lucas Harland sat down by his sister, and taking her hand said with great kindness, 'If you can persuade Miss Greystoke to spend as much of her time as possible with you, till we go down to Heathcote, you will be doing me a good turn as well. I may then hope for another hour in the seventh heaven. Music is my wine and strong drink, isn't it?' He was not looking towards Marian, who saw, nevertheless, a mighty colour mounting to his forehead.

'I can't run away from Miss Raby,' she stammered, under the contagion of so much feeling. 'But—certainly—when I left home I had thought of offering myself—' She did not end the sentence. Before her mind's eye rose up columns of advertisements, and a haggard multitude of lady's companions, making her at once ridiculous and despicable. The paleness which now sat on her brow was touching.

'And you needn't run away from the Doctor,' cried Mr Harland. 'She has her patients all day. Spend that time with my sister. We will arrange for the evenings. Miss Raby could perhaps dine here. But the whole morning you surely have to yourself. And we—I mean Miss Harland—can take you wherever you like—even to Mrs Henshaw's again,' with a smile which had its sweetness for Marian.

'I never did like Mrs Henshaw, really,' she answered,

'and—no—I don't want to call on her again. But I will come to you, since you are so extraordinarily kind, Miss Harland; that is, with my friend's consent.'

Miss Raby gave her consent at once.

'You will drive away the morbid fancies which bring on Miss Harland's neuralgic pains and dizziness,' she said; 'and the brother and sister will amuse you and show you the world—an admirable arrangement. Let us hope it will grow into the companionship you wanted. Stranger things have happened.'

The next three weeks, of quiet but constant initiation into the ways of an idle, busy, luxurious, indolent and, after all, agitated life, in which Mr Harland's comings and goings had the effect of an excitement thrown into the still, deep current of his sister's conversations with Marian, passed under a new reckoning of time, which made them short in experience and endlessly long in retrospect. There were no large dinner-parties given in Fenimore Place; but friends came, Miss Raby dined now and then; music was always in request, though not as if it were the girl's price for her entertainment. She thought the master delightful as a host, considerate, vivacious, and full of the ambition which others can look on at admiringly, as in a play given for their benefit. Of all these things, however, she did not write one syllable home. Marian's letters to Mr Greystoke were as short as they were affectionate. For Rosie she bought some story-books, and, out of the money which her few little jewels had brought in, a new dress instead of her worn serge. The sight of riches gave her a feeling the reverse of what might have been expected; she thought less, and not more, of poverty; she took it for granted that money would somehow be forthcoming to the right kind of people. Her mind was in such a state as when the beggar who walks penniless along the highroad feels a presentiment that he is going to pick up some dropped silver by the hedgerows. She believed in luck, in her star, in to-morrow.

'You will go down to Sleepy Hollow fresh as a rose

in June,' said Miss Raby, when they were parting on the doorstep in Hillside Terrace. 'Come to me again. This house is your home, remember, Marian. Always, even when you come to your kingdom. I can't fancy you anything but a great lady. Make the best of Miss Harland; she is fond of you. And write me all about the bazaar. Good-bye!'

CHAPTER VIII

OMBRA LEGGIERA

MISS HARLAND was at Heathcote, and the whole neighbourhood, shaken with rumours of her brother's incalculable riches, and of splendid doings at the fancy fair, which was to reveal the god in his majesty—Zeus coming down in a golden shower—strove to picture beforehand what miracles were to be enacted. Mrs Greystoke reproved these indecent longings for amusements. 'We know not what to-morrow may bring forth,' she said, with pinched lips, to Emmeline, who hoped it would bring the declaration she had been vainly expecting from Charlie Latimer; and who did not scruple to hint her desires while Marian was within earshot. 'Charlie Latimer!' thought Marian to herself. 'Did I call up his name once in Fenimore Place? No, not once. He is absolutely nothing to me. But I shall not encourage Emmy. I daresay you will get some pleasure out of all this,' she said aloud; 'it is no use depending on young men; they are fickle.' Emmeline pouted; she was not quite sure of Marian. A whisper had reached her, not from Rosie, of Charlie's visit on that damp Monday morning.

The morrow, which Mrs Greystoke had disparaged as doubtful, scattered these clouds. It brought forth an invitation from Miss Harland for the two sisters to spend the week of the bazaar up at the Hall; a compliment which the Vicar's lady took to herself, partly from the general fitness of things, and also because she had been told that the new family were Evangelical,

'serious people,' as the phrase went, who would welcome a fellow-worker in the Gospel. That the King of Companies, the colossal chairman, whose enterprises cast a net over whole continents, had the highest repute among Low Churchmen and Dissenters, was indeed notorious. He did not often appear on the platform in Exeter Hall; and he never spoke on such occasions; but business pleaded exemption from duties that other men could fulfil; everyone had seen his excellent circulars, couched in a reserved but religious tone, on the subject of the Great Missionary Syndicate, which was intended to put the propagation of the Gospel on a sound financial basis, and enable those who loved the heathen in his blindness to treat him with due regard as an investment for both worlds. When Marian heard of this Syndicate, she laughed like an infidel; Mr Harland did not impress her at all in the light of a missionary. And the first evening, when she and Emmeline had transferred themselves to the Hall, she asked him whether he proposed to go out himself to Uganda, which was, at that moment, a hotbed of religious strife.

'Do you seriously think, Mr Harland, of becoming *the* Great Missionary?'

'It is an investment,' he replied gravely, 'and business is business. Religious people are mostly fools. That is to say, they don't understand money. I do. And I wish to help them.'

'And yourself,' she said a little saucily. She was excited, and, to tell the truth, astonished at her own pertness. But they both laughed.

'Why not? Is not the great modern principle self-help? But here comes Mrs Henshaw; please be my lightning-conductor, according to promise.'

'Will she join the Syndicate?' said Marian, hastily, as the lady drew near.

'After allotment, as a director of the marriage department. Invaluable experience, you know.'

They were a brilliant, though perhaps oddly-assorted, company at Heathcote. The bazaar, which was held

in the fine old Town Hall of Mintern, gaily adorned with flags and festoons, opened with a flourish of trumpets, and a speech from the Earl of Chertsey, Lord-Lieutenant in those parts. It was to last four days, and every afternoon witnessed a fresh pageant, devised and put on the stage by Mr Browne Vandyke, to the joy, amazement, scandal and everlasting remembrance of Mintern, Rylsford, and the coasts round about. Every evening, dinner on a magnificent scale at the mansion gathered those who had taken a share in these displays, and many more, unable to be present duriug the afternoon, but eager to feed on the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. The rich man himself moved up and down incessantly, and was all eyes and hands, greeting the world with royal good humour; and yet, as Marian could not help thinking, and she watched him closely—more closely than she was aware—those restless eyes of his had sometimes a far-off look, and he was curiously absent-minded when he came to her stall and inquired, with a satirical but tender fall in his voice, what business she was doing.

'Making a fortune, I think,' she answered merrily; 'but not for myself. This stock-in-trade is Miss Harland's.'

'Who will exact it with usury. I told her she had better give you these pretty things to sell, instead of coming down here and killing her remnant of good looks with sitting at the receipt of custom. A gallant brother, am I not? Oh, other good looks will only heighten the beauty of these rich stuffs! I fancy how you would traffic in an Eastern bazaar, Miss Greystoke, with such colours about you, if in the East women did not merely buy but sell.'

'And in the West we are sold, but don't buy. We are the merchandise.'

'Could there be more precious?' After a pause, 'Will you sell me that pin with the heartsease in the setting? I am passionately fond of the flower, and these are good stones—topaz, diamond, beryl.'

'Oh, not that,' said Marian, with a movement of—terror, was it?—and colouring violently.

'Why not? I chose it on purpose. And now it has passed through your fingers, I must. Why not, I say?'

'Because—because,' she stammered, 'I forget the price.'

He took it gently from her, in spite of her evident reluctance.

'Let me fix the price, will you? I am very honourable, and I will pay it down—let me see—on Thursday evening, when the fair is over and we are settling accounts.'

It seemed a children's game to Marian, who had now recovered her self-possession.

'You make-believe to buy and sell, as if we were playing at shop. And, really, it isn't much else.'

'No, I am making a serious purchase,' he answered. 'Write Thursday evening in your book, and promise to take what I offer.'

'Even if it should be a king's ransom?' The old English phrase was running in her mind; she could hardly tell why.

'Yes,' said he, in the same playful tone, 'or a queen's dowry.'

This was all entertaining. But Mr Harland had only stepped aside when Charlie Latimer came up, whom she had not set eyes on since the day of their meeting, and, she supposed he would now call it, their quarrel. She did not wish to meet him at all. Yet, if she must, in public there would be less chance of his saying or doing anything disagreeable. Seemingly occupied with her wares and her marketing, she kept her gaze down for a while; there was a deserted space in front, however, and she could not pretend that no shadow had fallen across it; the singular tension, as of a storm in the atmosphere, which accompanies this kind of meeting, was unendurable, and she turned her face slowly to where the young man was standing. When their eyes met, she could have shrieked aloud. Charlie was holding the edge of

the counter with such a grip as denoted that his limbs had given way; there was not a particle of colour in his cheeks, and—good Heavens! she thought, has he been drinking? To the common judgment it well might have appeared so. He did not speak; but his lips quivered, and their ashy paleness made all the more impression that, as a rule, they were, if anything, a little too much coloured.

'Are you ill, Charlie?' Marian exclaimed, running to where he was with a glass of water in her hand. He took it down at a gulp.

'Oh no, not ill,' he said in a husky voice. 'Why should I be ill?'

'But you look dreadful.' The word slipped; it was not that she meant to say.

'I look what I am. Who was that man fiddle-faddling with this rubbish?' pointing to the display of articles on the counter.

'Mr Harland has been purchasing of me—a rather pretty breast-pin; not rubbish, Charlie.' It was advisable to get into a lighter key.

'Ah, that is Mr Harland! Did you ever see him before? He was very free and easy.'

'Emmeline and I are staying at the Hall.'

'And I dine there on Thursday. Sell *me* something; that watch chain—whose hair is it?' He was fumbling with a chain of yellow hair that lay close to Marian's hand. She took it from him gently. 'That is not for sale; it is Rosie's hair; she plaited it for me while I was in town.'

'Did you meet Mr Harland in town?' insolently and suspiciously.

'Now, Charlie, I won't be catechised,'—with a smile to soften the words; 'buy what you want, and make room for Mrs Henshaw,' who, to Marian's relief, was gliding up to them in her tortuous way. That Mrs Henshaw's appearance should be welcomed as a relief!

'How prettily you two have been quarrelling!' cried that lady, sweeping round to get a direct view of Charlie. 'Quite dramatic! I couldn't resist watching

you. But have I interrupted the *dénoûment*, Mr Charlie Latimer?' and she held out a tiny hand.

The young man started. 'Oh! Mrs Henshaw,' he growled, taking the miniature fingers into his great paw. 'You at Mintern? The hunting season's just over.'

'*Nous autres*,' said the South African, sweetly, '*nous chassons à toute saison de l'année*.'

'I don't understand French; never did,' was the still truculent reply. 'I suppose you mean that women always hunt. Do they, Marian?'

'You ought to know,' said Marian. 'Have you been hunted?'

'The chase is beginning,' exclaimed Mrs Henshaw; '*gare à vous, beau cousin!*'

'Good afternoon!' said Charlie, walking away. But the lady touched his arm.

'Have you seen our Chamber of Horrors? Do come and inspect it. Only you must swear not to reveal what is shown. Mr Vandyke and I have the keys of the Bluebeard chamber.'

'Some damned mystification!' muttered the impatient Charlie. 'I'm no hand at keeping secrets,' he said shortly, and turned on his heel.

Madame—one always thought of her as French—looked after him.

'What a beautiful young man he is!' she sighed out to Marian. 'England is the country of beautiful young men. But not passionate—no, simply marble—cold and proud. Yet one likes them. Don't you, Miss Greystoke? Don't you feel deeply for your cousin?'

Deeply enough in her miserable fear that Charlie had given way, had been drinking hard, since she refused him; but this was not the person she would take into her confidence.

'Mr Latimer is universally liked,' was all she said.

'How formal you English girls are! Mr Latimer, indeed! Now *I* call him Charlie. Ever since we saw so much of one another in the hunting field, I've been quite fond of him. He is such a noble fellow! And

what lovely hazel eyes! Robbie—my poor, dear husband, you know—would have been very jealous; but we were then thinking about our separation, and, of course, it didn't matter.'

'You are wanted in the Chamber of Horrors, Mrs Henshaw,' said Mr Browne Vandyke, approaching them gravely. 'There is a crowd waiting.'

'Only three at a time,' she answered, 'and they must be sworn to secrecy.' The air cleared when she took herself away.

We need not be surprised, however, if to Marian's feeling that afternoon seemed to have drawn down upon itself a thick and appalling cloud which ruined her enjoyment. She hoped Charlie would pay her stall a second visit. He never came; and the next two days he was invisible. She had an uneasy suspicion that he might be somewhere in the large building, close at hand, watching. Why did he not let her alone? It was intolerable that her freedom should be threatened in this way, when she was beginning to taste the cup that had so long been denied her. Charlie looked the ghost of his former self, indeed, and she was sorry for him; but none could lay the blame at her door. She had never pretended to love him; and now, had Emmeline burst in upon her with news of their engagement, she would have been delighted.

Thursday afternoon arrived, a sparkling April day, sunshine and showers chasing each other across the sky; and Mintern Town Hall was as pretty a spectacle as eyes could wish—the stalls aglow with fresh and brilliant specimens of ladies' contributions to the arts and crafts; the purchasers looking animated with a sense of pleasure to be got in ways hitherto little practised down in their province, for Mr Vandyke's living processions of the Bayeux tapestry were not yet finished, and they had stirred the torpid fancy of this benighted shire no less than if they had been a miracle-play. Their composer had first chosen for his subject the wonderful webs of colour from both Testaments

that adorn Rheims Cathedral. 'But no,' he said to Mrs Henshaw and Marian—the latter of whom he had taken into his confidence immediately, owning her to be an artist—'Bayeux they will stand, thinking it Norman and historical—"the Conquest, my dear madam, you remember, with which everybody that is anybody crossed the Channel!"—but Rheims would frighten them. They have no religion, poor things! gorgeous tones are to them as the sin of Achan, who was overcome by the goodly Babylonish garment. The shekels of gold and silver they can better away with.'

And so they gazed on the counterfeit presentment of Queen Matilda's needlework, and laughed at its grotesque beauty, and were taken out of their dull selves. Almost they had forgiven Mrs Henshaw her Chamber of Horrors, the secret of which, now known to them all under oath, was *une affaire de Polichinelle;* but many still felt it rankling. The woman was very bold who would exhibit under this name a model drawing-room, scores of which were flourishing within a dozen miles, with their excellent old rosewood and mahogany, their horsehair, red serges, flock papers, huge round tables covered with diapers and the Family Bible, their worsted ornaments, and wax flowers in glass shades. How had she saved all these things from the deluge of art, whose floods now overtopped the mountains elsewhere? But the purely agricultural neighbourhood, suffering from a fifteen years' depression, had no superfluous cash wherewith to buy new household gods. The ancient teraphim must suffice, provided there was no mocking of their familiar ugliness. Here was the peril of bazaars and fancy fairs; strangers came down, with money and notions, eager to burn what the natives adored, and sometimes to adore what they burnt. However, it was a wrinkle on the green mantle of their standing-pool; the frogs croaked, but their very croaking gave signs of life. All paid a visit to the Chamber of Horrors; and Mrs Henshaw might boast that from the day of her descent on Mintern a new era was dated in the furnishing department of that and six other

country towns, the denizens of which she had converted by this ocular demonstration that they were behind the times.

In all the processions and dressings-up Marian had taken no part. Did she tremble before Mrs Greystoke, who laid such mummeries under a ban? Or was she meditating a bolder move? When the last group of Bayeux had vanished through the wings—for they acted on a regular stage—and the curtain fell, curiosity was excited by the announcement of an after-piece—'*L'envoi*,' said Mr Vandyke, standing in all the manager's pomp and solemn black before the footlights. Not far away sat the house-party from Heathcote, which this afternoon included Mr Harland's great ally in music and company-promoting, Lord Wootton of Wynflete. The stage illumination, touching these heads, showed Lord Wootton as a man of military bearing and uncertain age; his pale, wrinkled features and a tremulous motion, as though the first slight warning of paralysis, declared him to be well on into the years that have no pleasure in them. He looked seventy, but his whiskers and fine bushy locks, a lustrous sable, took away a quarter of a century. He was tall, gaunt, louder in tone than Mr Harland—whose fault, as Marian observed, was too strident a voice—and his manner, though not uncivil, was that of a *grand seigneur*—if polite, somewhat mocking, and often abrupt. As yet, he had not seen Marian. Where had she spent the morning? Lucas did not know; he felt her absence and inquired of his sister, who replied that she was gone out, but intended to join their party at the close of the afternoon. She still kept away. Mr Harland conversed more or less at random, his imagination busy with certain little trifles, mere nothings said or seen, the gesture of a moment, a trill shaking music out of insignificant syllables, a glancing eye, a hand resting on some dark ground that threw it into relief. 'What do you say to my proposal, Lucas?' inquired Lord Wootton, who had been talking prospectus for the last ten minutes.

'Say?' replied his friend, quickly, as if a sentinel

caught napping, 'I say nothing now. Tell me after dinner; I always leave these novelties to ripen an hour or two.' He had not heard a word.

A bell rings softly, at intervals, in the distance, like the sheep bell one hears on a mountain side. The curtain draws up. A rocky landscape, tall birch trees waving on the heights, mossy stems just visible through the dim obscure. Lights in the hall are down, and on the stage nothing but a faint, uncertain glimmer. Behind the scene, voices dying away are just perceptible as they chant in chorus—'Dinorah, Dinorah, perchè t'ascondi?' There is a slight stir among the audience. 'What are they going to give?' asks someone at Lord Wootton's elbow. He turns to Harland. 'Is that the prelude to the shadow-song in Dinorah? What years since I heard it? Meyerbeer is quite below the horizon now.'

'Hush!' answered Lucas. 'Who is the cantatrice?' He was all one quiver of expectation and surprise.

Over the rocks comes lightly running on tiptoe, as borne by the wind, Dinorah, in a costume which had its symbolism according to the learned and eccentric stage manager—not the usual Breton maiden's wedding-garment, but a topaz-yellow gown, floating like a flame in the darkness about the tall, slender figure, with bare arms, a necklace of wild violets round her throat and falling on her breast, and a garland of gorse blossoms on her head, from which the long, black ringlets were streaming. And from the right shoulder a belt of pansies, looking like signs of the zodiac, fell across the flaming robe.

'A witch?' inquired some in whispers. 'The mad bride,' answered those who remembered 'Dinorah'; but 'Who is she?' was the yet more general question. Before it could be answered, the yellow apparition had burst into her song. She was seeking Hoel, the vanished lover, the magician who himself was in quest of hidden treasure, the lost bridegroom. 'Where is he? Where is my true one?' she sang; with what an accent! Few there had ever listened to such musical expression; but those that could best judge of it were the most de-

cidedly moved. Harland—his pulse seemed to stop, and then to rush on once more in a furious trembling of delight. He did not need to ask who it was. The eyes told him, with their strange yet familiar air; and though the features were designedly pale, he had followed their outline too often during the past weeks to be mistaken. But a wonderful transformation! consummate actress! She looked the image of that Dinorah who never hitherto had been seen on the stage, but only in some old Celtic poet's dream—a witch-maiden, innocent, distracted by love, the Lady of the Wolds, to dance and sing in the moonlight. How she rendered that 'legend,' scanning her own hand the while, like the witch-doctor of the mountain who had told her sad fortunes:—

'Povero fiore della Bretagna
Sarai dal gelo colto doman.'

And then the cry, rising up from unknown deeps in the heart, 'Non v'è più amore! non v'è Himen!'—'No more love, the wedding shall not be.' A ray of moonlight steals upon the dark; her timid fears yield a little. The shadow of herself comes forth and lies quiet as a dog at her feet. She is not alone; no, but she must salute the newcomer, 'Thou shalt dance at my wedding with Hoel!' Where did she learn those pretty fantastic steps? With the restless apparition she dances lightly, silently, as a fallen leaf; she plays with it, caresses it, runs with it, smiles and sings to it, 'Fairy or dream, fly not away.' Clouds come over the moon; her companion disappears, and she is troubled, turning from the almost infantine frolic to a vague sense of sorrow lost during that mad moment. There is extraordinary power in the sudden change, as of a creature hitherto unknown glancing forth amid the gauzy veils of surface and passing emotions. The rustic maiden yields to make way for the Lady of the Wolds. Then the clouds fleet, and the beams and the shadow are with her once more; she is dancing, but in a pensive attitude, reminiscent of

so many sweet, irrecoverable hours, when her shepherd lad walked by her side and thought of no treasure-seeking. 'Ombra leggiera,' she whispers musically, as to a departing dream. With the dream, too, Dinorah passes, a floating vision of draperies across which the heartsease dash their fitful spots like butterflies' wings; and above it comes out, distinct but unconscious, a woman's face, beautiful with large, sad eyes and streaming hair. The scene closes, and the tinkle of far-off bells is drowned in applause.

But, if the singer was absorbed, what of the audience? They were a mixed and unequal company. To most of them Miss Greystoke was not even a name; and, except in her father's parish, none would have recognised her in any costume, on or off the stage. That Marian could sing and play when she had a mind, her parents had noticed long ago, giving such an obvious accomplishment no further thought when she declined to take the village choir and was obstinately silent in church. Even those to whom she was a familiar sight in Rylsford hesitated to believe that this amazing and unhallowed actress in the witch's gown was their Vicar's daughter. Had they seen Herodias in person dancing on those pasteboard rocks, it could not have astonished them more. Yet, for all their astonishment, they sat breathless and subdued, in the presence of a magnetic power wholly inconceivable to them, like children who are witnessing their first thunderstorm, or some other putting forth of mighty agencies, too real in their manifestations to be disregarded, and terrifying with a sense of their reality. While Dinorah sang, there was no clapping of hands; not a word was spoken, and all eyes were fixed upon the moving figure. She had caught up this difficult assembly into the whirlwind of her excited and creative feeling.

Lord Wootton deserved particular study, could one have attended to him, as the little play moved through its phases. At first his expression was that of a man who is going to be bored; a note or two swept that fear from his eyes; he listened, and his lips grew tight, his

nostrils expanded, a faint salmon-tint crept over his ancient features; ecstasy sat in the crow's-feet which marked under his eyelashes the flight of time. He was perfectly motionless. Not more so than Harland, however, who had thrown himself back in his chair, and with a slight, foolish-looking smile, strange upon his observant face, kept the strictest watch for every least accent and turn of the voice or the attitude while Dinorah was coquetting amiably with her shadow. And he, too, wore a flush about the eyes, deeper than Lord Wootton's. Was it a new experience? Did it recall associations from the past? That it was highly pleasurable no one could doubt who saw him, however little versed in the language, or natural hieroglyphics, by which the outer man betrays his spirit-master lurking behind the veil of the five senses.

Least of all, could that young man doubt, hidden away in a corner of the assembly-room, whose half-shut eyes had been taking it all in—the stage with its dancing girl, the two among the spectators that were evidently most affected by Marian's exhibition of herself—yes, that was the word—and the novelty, the horror, which melted into one scorching sensation. It is not likely that she saw Charlie Latimer; but *he* saw the whole audience drawn as to a focus by her singing; and he was thunderstruck. Leaning his elbows on his knees and his face upon his hands, thrust forward in an attitude of the most intense eagerness, he took his fill of gazing, and a miserable sight it was to him. He could have leaped across the footlights and scourged her off the boards. How did she dare to affront them all with airs and grimaces that made of her, oh! a coquette appealing to every man in the room for admiration? for—he could not think his thought to the end; it was too horrible. And there they were, smirking and grinning, as in a music hall; and Marian would not be aware of it, but must go on with her tripping inanities, her demi-semi-quavers, her shakes and embellishments—a ballet-girl, he said to himself in an inward storm of anger that made him feel sick. No sooner was the curtain down than he

sprang from his chair and rushed, like the madman he was becoming, to the bar close at hand, where he swallowed down three or four glasses of fiery liquor, and, ordering out his trap, drove home furiously. It was a miracle that he did not break his neck by the way, or run over the children who fled before his wheels.

There was another, too, looking on, as dreadfully taken aback as Charlie Latimer; but who, oh who, shall attempt to picture the disgust, the anguish, the bewilderment of Mrs Greystoke? As, when the helpless Iphigenia was to be sacrificed in the painting, the Greek artist rendered every other face admirably, but when he came to the bereaved Agamemnon had no resource except to turn away his features from the audience, hinting a grief to which no art was equal, so will we fling down our brush and turn from the spectacle of a Puritan mother whose child exhibits openly before her on a public stage. To say that she did not know where she was would be a small thing; hardly did she know who she was, in the fiery hail of vengeance for transgressions unknown that seemed to be descending on her black hat and feathers. But she had not the man's refuge to fly to; and she waited until this thrice unhappy daughter should come down from the improvised green-room, led in triumph by Mr Vandyke, who had devised and executed the whole plot.

It was a singular meeting that took place below the footlights, now extinguished, while the stall-keepers were packing up their remnants, knots of friends and acquaintances stood about in the benches chatting, and workpeople were hurrying to and fro with boards, trestles, baskets, and all the *bric-à-brac* of a festival played out. Mrs Greystoke lingered at a little distance, for Mr Harland's friends held the front row, and as soon as Marian appeared they flocked round her with a thousand questions, all implying praise or flattery. The girl was now in her ordinary black; and her face, flushed from her late excitement, bore on it some tokens of the make-up to which Dinorah

had been obliged to submit, in an ashy paleness here and there and dark circles under the eyes.

'You are fatigued,' said Mr Harland; 'don't talk now, please. Let me help you to wrap up well, and come at once to the carriage. This April weather is murderous!' He looked the eulogy that he did not speak.

Lord Wootton, with an old man's privilege, took Marian by the hand.

'You never acted before?' he said.

'Never,' she answered, smiling faintly.

She was very tired, but exultant.

'You have invented your own manner,' he went on gravely; 'it is intimate and natural. You will be yourself—which is now everything—should you go on the stage.'

'But that she never shall,' exclaimed Mrs Greystoke, bursting into the ring which had formed round Marian —'never with my consent.'

The girl was scarlet. 'My mother,' she said, in a choking voice, to Lord Wootton, who had turned at the abrupt outcry, and was scanning this incomprehensible person as if an immense prospect lay behind her. He bowed, 'I congratulate you, madam, on a daughter who is equal to Giulia Cornaro—she certainly will be when she has had the advantage of training.'

'Training?' echoed the poor lady, 'my daughter in training?'

'She has begun splendidly,' threw in Mr Vandyke, with an encouraging smile which was lost on Mrs Greystoke, 'splendidly; and I am the happy instrument. Harland, weren't you surprised? We got the whole thing up in town. Miss Greystoke's suggestion, I admit—you have all the honours'—to Marian, who looked as though this conversation need not be followed up—'but the choice of Dinorah, the costume, the practising, I take all that to myself. Sketchy, of course, amateurish, too ardent, but suggestive. You will observe,' he was now addressing the enraged Vicar's wife, who could not escape him, 'our reading of the story

through these words was much more profound than Meyerbeer's. Meyerbeer has given us a rustic maiden, mere idyllic village tragedy, and so forth; but *we* take it that Dinorah is herself the Fay, the Lady of the Wolds, who falls in love with the treasure-seeker, but can only win him if he loses the treasure, which, with her shadow-songs and her fairy bells, and her enchantments generally, she contrives to bring about. An allegory worth expressing in far nobler music. Don't you agree, Harland?'

'I never agree to losing treasures,' said Lucas, 'but you have done magnificently. Come, Miss Greystoke.'

'Marian, why did you do this thing?' her mother insisted, still angry, in a low tone, as they were walking towards the door.

'Because I have made up my mind to be an actress, and I wanted an advertisement,' said Marian, looking straight in front of her. 'I have got one, you see, mother. An engagement will soon follow.' She spoke with a calm seriousness which was new in Mrs Greystoke's hearing. Their eyes met; and, in the language of the sea, the more ancient craft lowered her colours. She was beaten, raked fore and aft, her masts gone by the board, her cannon dismounted. They parted without sign of amity.

Dinner at Heathcote Hall was a brilliant affair that Thursday night, and perhaps the most appetising dish, though not set down in the bill of fare, was Miss Greystoke's adventure, which everybody out of her immediate neighbourhood touched upon, allusively or directly, by way of sauce piquante to their imagination. Had all the world suddenly become a stage, conversation could scarcely have shown a deeper theatrical tinge. But the last act was still wanting. How would it come—to crown the preceding? or to mar them by dramatic ineffectiveness? We shall know soonest by keeping close to Mr Harland.

He was in overflowing spirits, now and then relieved, as in excellent music, by a bar of rest. Always

abstemious, he drank no wine to-night; which his sister observing she remarked in an aside to Marian as they passed into the drawing-room, 'Lucas must be intending some serious business; he never touches wine when he is meditating a great stroke.' The wonderful moonlight and the mild air drew them all, by-and-by, to the terraces which led down from this stately but sombre old house to the home fields, as they were called. Though but a couple of miles from Rylsford, the character of the landscape immediately round Heathcote was, if not grander, less mournful; it had its wide reaches of pleasant beechwood, its gentle lawns, and a more cultivated appearance, as tamed into domestic beauty by centuries of gardening on no small scale. The river, not very broad, threw up a light among the grasses where it wandered along. A silvery sky harmonises well with the emerald that one dreams of as yet visible, because one has admired it so lately. And there was an abundance of peace, a satisfaction large and mellow, resting on the scene—a clearness which had lost the day's splendours of flying sun, but was exquisite in as potent a fashion, and set one's thoughts to delicate minors.

Mr Harland, on the edge of the upper terrace, was pointing out to Marian a lofty cedar, between whose branches the light stayed in silver sheaves, bound by the dark stems. She looked abroad over the familiar country. 'Heathcote is sweet English landscape, Rylsford Valley a prison,' she said, at length, following the train of reflections suggested by all she had gone through since her day of battle at home.

'Don't you like Rylsford?' said her host, quietly.

'Like Rylsford?' she echoed. 'I hate it with a perfect hatred. Doesn't one always hate the place where one has been miserable?' The impetuous words were out; she could not recall them; yet she felt the glow of shame at having uttered them to a stranger. Was not Mr Harland a stranger? But he had been so considerate; a friend, she would think, and no stranger.

'You have been unhappy? Poor child—not long unhappy, I trust? Only a girl's imaginary troubles, which will pass, eh?'

'They are not imaginary; they are as real as money or the want of it can make them. Am I honest with you, Mr Harland? Forgive me; let us go in.'

'Not just yet. Isn't the moonlight a magician? Songs and shadows! Your Dinorah was very original. To-night—I suppose now you couldn't dance with your shadow out here—on the terrace.'

'The play is played out. I must go home to-morrow. If you can help me among the stage-people—I don't know a soul—I will dance with any number of shadows.'

He kept still for a moment or two. 'By the way, who is walking on the lower terrace—away to our left—with Mrs Henshaw?' Marian followed his direction.

'I can hardly make out. Yes, now I see. It is my cousin, Charlie Latimer.'

'Is Mr Latimer—is he a very steady young man? He is remarkably handsome.'

'Charlie Latimer is one of the nicest fellows in existence, and has always been as steady as a rock.' She was not going to give away Charlie because of a single slip—if he had slipped, when she saw him on Monday so haggard and woebegone.

'He had better be steady if Mrs Henshaw has designs upon him. Men are so innocent, you know. But tell me, since you have not been happy at Rylsford, should you like to try Heathcote for a change?'

'How can I? As Miss Harland's companion?' She looked at him eagerly.

'No, as my wife.' And he put out his hand to take hers; but she almost ran down the steps in front of them. He followed her. They were now in a green gloom made by overhanging boughs; but his expression was distinctly visible as he approached, still offering his hand. Marian waved him off; too bewildered for thought or reasoning, it seemed to her that she must somehow keep the man at a distance until he had

recovered from this fit of madness. It was madness, on one side or the other.

But he would not be repulsed. 'Marian,' said he, for the first time—and how seductive is that taking possession of the name, which is henceforth to be a perpetual recitative, 'I mean what I say. Will you accept Heathcote, and me into the bargain? The place is mine; there was a heavy mortgage upon it which Mr De la Beche could not clear, and I have come into it; but we shall not publish the matter immediately. I have other estates; we will live here, if you prefer it.'

'And I have nothing,' she answered proudly, out of the deep shade. 'That is why you mock me, I suppose. Cannot you have done with the comedy?'

'At once,' was the reply. 'Let us go up to the house and find my sister. I will repeat every word to her—to all who are staying at Heathcote. Good God, child, don't you understand me yet? I will ride across to Rylsford and call on your father to-night, if you wish.' He was falling into an angry, impatient tone, which, in spite of her strong amazement, wrought the beginnings of conviction. But it was still incredible.

To answer one way or the other seemed beyond her. In the silence she could hear Mrs Henshaw's trilling laugh, and, as she fancied, the sound of Charlie Latimer's voice.

'I have nothing but myself,' she repeated mechanically.

'Yourself is all I want. I am a rich man; I can pay for everything that money will buy. You must *give* me yourself; I can't buy Marian Greystoke, and I am in love with her.'

'But she is not in love with—with anybody,' cried the girl, as driven to her last defence.

'Not?' he said jocosely; 'and those pansies—that heartsease?'

'It was a mere coincidence, and Mr Vandyke's doing, which could not be altered after Monday. Do you punish me for that?'

It seemed hopeless. 'I can't persuade you, Marian, that I am in earnest?'

'Impossible,' she replied.

'Well, then,' said he, turning to go up the steps, 'mark this. I have always taken whatever I wanted, no matter who came in the way. On Monday—I give you breathing space, Marian—but on Monday morning at eleven—ay, eleven precisely—expect me at Rylsford in Mr Greystoke's study, and then say no, if you dare. Ah, Mrs Henshaw, the moon is cold—Casta Diva!—we ought all to be indoors.'

CHAPTER IX

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS

SUCH was the tempest that broke on Marian out of the April sky. How the next days were spent—in what tumultuous commotions of feeling, what wild and self-confounding arguments, what flashes of golden vanity and returns upon a healthier mood, Marian, did she endeavour to call them up, never could have told. Her petty Kingdom was all astir with the drumming invasion of forces that broke through its barriers; and their loud clangorous music deadened resistance before they came, as it were, into sight. There was a terrible power in Mr Harland's decisiveness. At breakfast, on the Friday morning, he seemed as usual spritely and the man of the world, who has a fitting word for all his guests. To Marian he said little, and that little did not signify; but his eye rested on her now and then with a quiet complacency. When they were shaking hands at the door and Emmeline had already entered the carriage—one of the Heathcote carriages—that was taking them home, he held Marian for one perceptible instant to say 'Monday at eleven,' and turned while she was speechless.

At the Vicarage, after luncheon, Mrs Greystoke would have opened on the awful chapter of stage-plays, expecting, but not shrinking from, an outburst of Marian's temper. To her surprise the girl answered in an absent-minded tone, forgetful, it might appear, of yesterday's revolt, 'There is no hurry, mother, wait a while;' and she would say no more. Rosie came babbling and prattling about her; but whereas she was

always ready to 'make believe' and dress up with the child, and was the more imaginative of the two, now Rosie must act out her little day-dream to a silent, preoccupied spectator, who kissed her affectionately but had no words in her mouth. Apprehension was blind; she saw none of the things about her. The soul had upon it a burden as of some unparalleled duty; and yet who was there to consult?

No one, and least of all her father. He, good, easy man—though not perhaps so easy as he seemed—was plucking up a livelier spirit, now these rich people had come to Heathcote. On Sunday they filled the long-deserted Squire's pew and overflowed it. Mr Greystoke preached a seasonable discourse. For his subject he had chosen Solomon, the King of Peace, and for his text two verses from the Second Book of Chronicles, 'Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold. And the King made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees made he as sycamore trees that are in the low plains in abundance.' These high-coloured radiant verses were given out with a perfect intonation. And the sermon was an inventory of desirable things, set on a background of war—David's bloodsheddings and the fierce old times of the Judges—sombre enough to lend them a depth and a reality which, to Marian, listening or only musing on a syllable caught at intervals, were becoming the substance of this new life, held out to her by the Master of Heathcote. She scanned him once and again, when he was not looking her way. Solomon in all his glory? Yes, a great King, though dressed like any other English gentleman, but so abounding in wealth as to buy even Marian Greystoke. He said that it was giving, not buying or selling. Which was it? Her eyes were taking in this man's features—far from unhandsome, yet to her not simply delightful. Nothing, except this eternal debate, stirred within while she looked. Then she did not love him? No, nor had she ever pretended; she could like him well enough; the touch of fascination was not in Mr Lucas Harland, but

in the possibilities of enjoyment that came tempting her when she thought of his position. Well, he might come to-morrow—it was not probable—but she would send him away as he came.

Thus, in the decorous front chamber of her meditations—in that mental drawing-room where we all play a decent part to ourselves—but, somewhere below the threshold, was a glimmering light—the merest tallow dip, seemingly without promise to endure—which glanced on a dim presentment of this same Marian, saying yes, and not no, to the wooer in the dark. And Monday morning arrived. During breakfast the Vicar announced casually that he had to attend a clergy meeting at the Archdeacon's, and should not be at home for lunch. Marian smiled as if her good resolution had been blessed from above. Yet, ten minutes later, she was saying to Mr Greystoke, 'Couldn't you stay in, father, this morning? I think—I don't know—some of the people at Heathcote may be calling. Mr Harland—'

'If there is any prospect of Mr Harland coming this way, I will gladly give up the Archdeacon, my dear. One owes that to a man who can do so much good with his money.'

'And evil,' said the struggling angel in Marian.

'Ah! well, yes, and evil, I suppose; but "King Solomon passed all the Kings of the earth in riches and wisdom," you know. And I hear that Mr Harland is wise. I will stay in, certainly. Thank you for being so attentive, Marian.'

Marian fled to the garden and walked impatiently up and down along the hawthorn hedge, now putting forth a few sprays of blossom. It was a mild morning, warm and slightly damp, such as makes the spirit languish in spring, and fills a youthful fancy with discontent, not energetic but relaxing. She had no definite plan before her mind. She was drifting along a tide of soft emotions, listless, as on velvet cushions, the water lapping and murmuring in a half sleep. Eleven struck from the low tower of Rylsford Church;

and while the last stroke was audible, Mr Harland rode up to the gate.

Half an hour passed; what were they saying in her father's study? She would know without long delay, for the new Squire of Heathcote came striding down to the paddock fence, on the other side of which Marian was to be seen pacing gravely along, and leaping it hastily, he ran up to her. They shook hands.

'What a gracious man your father is! I thought so from his rich voice, heard for the first time yesterday. He is perfect.'

'I can't praise my father,' she said simply, 'but I am very fond of him.'

'And he of you! The apple of his eye! A golden apple, I told him. Most unwilling to lose his favourite. Of course, it will not be losing. Heathcote is next door.'

She would not suffer these blossoms to intoxicate her with perfume. 'Did the Vicar tell you how embarrassed our circumstances are? I suppose there was hardly any need. Look round on this garden; look at the house;—look at me.'

'Looking at you, Marian, blinds one to all the rest. Mr Greystoke was very candid; I would not let him follow up the details. Nothing whatever signifies now but your consent. Say yes, my child, and make me happy. What an old-fashioned speech, you are thinking. It is, but I mean it. Say *you* mean it, too.'

'But if I don't love you?' in a low, quivering voice.

He smiled confidently, as he answered, 'Not yet! You will by-and-by. I am not a bad sort of a fellow, Marian. I have been adored in my time. You have no brother; let me take care of your people, and build up your house again. For their sake, if not for mine.'

It was audacious, simple, beseeching—was it not all true? Could it not be true? Did love always come before marriage? Here was the charm of good sense, kindness, sincerity. And who was she to keep her

people down, when one little, little word—the slightest motion of head or hand—would change their winter to a glorious springtide? Could she be so selfish?

That farthing dip down in the cellar suddenly put forth all the colours of the rainbow; her decorous drawing-room principles seemed to be idle talk and schoolgirl poetry. She gazed into the rainbow—what a universe of delight, transparent, far-shining! Could there be anything not fit for Marian Greystoke to do, in the beautiful places whither she might lead, as in a dance, that dear child, Rosie? and the grave elders—even Emmeline—might follow at their ease, not miserable any more. Harland saw the sweet poison fermenting; he would utter no ill-omened syllable to break the charm. And they walked silently together for the first time by the hawthorn hedge; until, in pure abstraction, the girl put up her hand, plucking a tiny spray which was white with blossom. She turned a dreamy countenance upon him, and stood irresolute, holding the flowers to her heart. In a moment he had taken them from between the fingers that now let them go, listlessly, distractedly. 'Marian, this is our pledge!' exclaimed the ardent lover, putting to his lips the snowy spray. She was in the act of flight again, as on Thursday, when she ran down the terrace at Heathcote. In vain, he had clasped her by the wrist, and she remained palpitating in his grasp—the bird was caught.

'Oh, father,' she whispered that afternoon, between crying and laughing, in the study which had witnessed their conversation six weeks ago, 'I couldn't help it; the man—Mr Harland—was too strong for me. Don't, for God's sake, don't tell mother till the very last. She will misunderstand; I know she will. Had it not been for that horrid dance at Mintern, no one could throw a stone at me. But they will—mother will, soonest of all. And I never, never dreamt of Mr Harland in this way. I said to Mr Vandyke, "Advertise me as a singer, a possible actress; I have no other chance." And Dinorah was the most innocent thing he could think of.'

'But you see Mr Harland was dreaming of you.

What a day for us all! Oh, my dear, dear Marian, you are indeed a blessed child. Your mother cannot think otherwise. It is a providence; "the Lord giveth" she will say as I do, and she will be so thankful.'

Can it be imagined that this was no comfort to Marian? 'Indeed, indeed,' she said earnestly, 'you must keep this to yourself as long as it is not public property. I entreat, I insist.'

'A little unreasonable, my child—but you are in command now; you must always have your way.'

The look of intense happiness on her father's face did something to quiet the tumult within.

Joy is more contagious than influenza; perhaps, on reaching a certain degree, it cannot be hidden. The excellent Vicar's wife began to feel its warmth in the neighbourhood; she ceased her scolding after a little while, subdued by her husband's unwonted ripple of satisfaction as he moved more energetically to and fro; by Marian's eagerness, somewhat kept down, by walking hither and thither, or flashing into speeches that had lost their sharp flavour; and by an atmosphere, sun-laden, tropically steaming with unknown and unimaginable promise, that now poured over desolate Rylsford and changed it to a garden of many-coloured Iram. But that was Marian's figure of comparison, borrowed from the old Greystoke romance she knew by heart. It would be impossible to conceal the news much longer, when Mr Harland was riding to the Vicarage, on pretexts always more transparent, every other day. And lo, it was not hidden; a dreadful thunder-clap announced to Marian that the guests who were lingering at Heathcote had somehow divined it.

Somebody else came riding furiously up to the Vicarage gate on a sunny afternoon, and leaving his horse in charge of the new stable boy—the first swallow, he, of their freshly-advancing spring—asked for Miss Marian, found her straying down on a path by the river-side, at the extremity of the garden, and burst into unceremonious speech with the words, 'Is it true, Marian, that you are going to marry Mr Harland?'

'What in the world have you to do with my marrying?' answered she, in a voice that shook between fear and indignation. 'Charlie, you much overdraw on a cousin's privileges.' She began to move towards the house.

'Cousin—what cousin?' he exclaimed, his eyes blazing with a light she had never seen in them. 'I am half mad about you, and you talk of cousins. You have got into my blood, my brain, my heart—it is a disease in me, insanity, I don't care how you call it; but, Marian, something binds us faster than cousinhood. We sink or swim together. *Do* you marry this man?'

'I marry whom I choose. You are not in *my* blood. Why do you torment me in this ungentlemanly way?'

'Let me alone,' he cried in answer; 'I am the tormented. I drink, and can't put you out of my mind. I ride like the devil; you are always there. I see you dancing, dancing before that fellow, and his eyes burning at you. Where was your modesty that afternoon? Now they say you have accepted him. Can a woman be so caught? Why, you never set eyes on Harland till a month ago.'

She had gone up the path, but he was following her still. 'Marian, dear Marian, don't be so angry with me. I shall kill myself—look what you have made of me! I heard it two days ago from that—from Mrs Henshaw. I've not slept since.'

At this appeal she hesitated and turned round. Charlie's face, of an exquisite brown clearness in his healthy days, had become blotched and sanguine; his eyes were wild, his hand shook. It was not, in a man hitherto sober in his drinking, delirium tremens, but a nervous prostration caused by want of sleep, food and rest during great mental disturbance. His cousin dreaded the thunder which she knew was piled up for her; but there was no cruelty in her disposition.

'Charlie,' she said again, softening her tone, 'it is the greatest pity you should feel for me in such a way.

I never can return it. Try to be your old self, and let me go my road.'

'But this marriage—is the news true? I ought to know,' he insisted.

She tried to put him off. 'Everyone will know, if there is any truth in the story, soon enough.'

He reeled at her saying, as though she had told him for the first time. Tears came into his eyes—tears of rage, humiliation, and a deeper feeling, or a better one—he breathed hard, and taking hold of her dress, which she pulled out of his grasp, stammered, 'Oh, my God! then you have sold yourself to him!' The whole sky was breaking into storm now. Her paltry little rushlight, which she had taken for a rainbow, fell into darkness, and the awful revelation of something like a crime smote upon her from every quarter of the heavens. Sold herself? Sold? Was it false? Could she face the conscience that now, embodied in this violent shape, stood outside her, accusing, and say it was not true? 'Sold, yes, you are sold! Did you love the man when you consented?' Charlie was raving. 'Say you love him now, and add a lie to the rest. Oh, you women, you wretched slaves—you—' he stopped. 'I must not call you what I think. And you would not take me, a month, a little month ago, when you had never so much as heard whether Harland was black or white.'

'At all events, I was no coquette; I did not pretend to care for you.'

'No; and so you pretend to care for him. Would you marry Harland if, like me, he had nothing but a farm and six hundred a year? Not you, I see it in your downcast looks. That was all the difference—money or no money. What is the right name of a girl that sells herself to a man for thousands a year? What—you are too innocent—how should you know? By God, Marian, you are that girl.'

'No, no, Charlie, I am not. Oh, I am not. Wait a moment. I will refuse Mr Harland. I see it all; I will send word that he must not come any more.

Trust me. Oh, you good cousin, you have opened my eyes. Father—father will write. Let me go to him.'

She ran like the wind, her dress floating along the paths as she went up to the Vicarage. Charlie, touched and overcome, was pursuing her, but he stopped short and she passed. What ought he to do now? Follow, persuade his uncle, see the match was broken off? He had no right, no claim. Better ride home now his thunderbolts were sped, leave the business to its workings, and get some sleep. All his limbs were aching. But an immense glow of happiness burned at his heart.

Meanwhile, the study door burst open, and in rushed Marian to her father. She was in tears, quaking with her new-found conscience, breathless. Mr Greystoke caught her in his arms, and set her gently down in a chair beneath the magnolia blooms over against his desk. She was panting too much to begin.

'Recover yourself, my dear,' he said quietly, standing near. 'What has happened? Don't be in a hurry. It is natural for you to be agitated in these days.' And as she was silent, full of her difficult resolve and how to approach the subject, he went on, lifting a pile of papers which he had been examining, 'This will interest you. I have got my broker in London to make out a list, as far as the information is accessible, of the companies in which Mr Harland has shares, or on which he sits as Director. And I find that he figures in no fewer than eighteen companies, the united paid-up capital of which amounts to eleven millions, four hundred and thirty-three thousand, six hundred and twenty-seven pounds. Of course we do not reckon in this the stock of such colossal undertakings as the chief English railways; but his share in them is enormous.'

His daughter was not listening. Her tears fell, and the heart, overcharged with remorse, with disappointment, swelled as if it must break. So prolonged a fit of weeping alarmed Mr Greystoke. He laid down his documents.

'Father,' she said at length, standing up and falling on his shoulder, 'I have done wrong. I don't love Mr Harland; I cannot marry him.'

The Vicar turned pale. 'I hope—I trust—there is nothing between you and your cousin Charlie. I see he is here again this morning; again you are troubled.'

'Charlie has done me the greatest kindness,' sobbed Marian, 'but I am not attached to Charlie, or to anybody. It is this marriage I want broken off.'

'Broken off! The marriage broken off! Not love Mr Harland? Why, my girl, do you know, or suspect, anything discreditable to Mr Harland?'

'Nothing, nothing. What should I know? He is a stranger to us all. But, if he were not rich— It is that, father. A woman ought to marry for love.'

'Ah, Marian, you are romantic, I see. Tut, tut, there is no harm done. Love comes with marriage in well-regulated feminine bosoms. I am not favourable to these surrenderings of affection when the man has not spoken. You can begin to love Mr Harland now. A good, gallant gentleman, I warrant,' laying his hand caressingly on the paid-up capital.

This new false conscience was no match for Charlie's thunder. 'I will not marry him,' she said, lifting her face proudly, 'write and tell him so; that I was hurried into a tacit agreement. He knows it; he will remember how it came about. Do, father; else I must.'

She could not help seeing that Mr Greystoke was deadly pale, and now needed her support. They looked at each other in painful silence, then he said, 'Sit down again. The hour has come which I thought'—He was quite broken.

'It can't matter so much to you, father,' she said in a timid whisper.

He sighed heavily. 'Marian, we are ruined—worse, dishonoured.'

If a coal of fire had fallen on her lips they could not have burnt more hotly.

'Dishonoured!' he said again. 'Not only in debt, as for years past, to every tradesman who will give us

credit; not only that I am penniless; that the price, little enough, which I got for the advowson of this place went, as other money, in luckless efforts to retrieve my bad speculations, but—don't look at me, child, or I shall be unable to make this hard confession—I—I have handled, appropriated funds belonging to the parish—charitable funds. There will be an audit at Michaelmas, and I have—nothing.'

The deep thunders in the garden were swallowed up in this dreadful clamour.

'I have nothing,' repeated the unhappy man.

'But mother—hasn't she, out of her own money? Have you told her? Wouldn't it be best?' Oh, what a world of bitter deceptions! Her father—a common cheat!

'I did tell her while you were up at Miss Raby's. Oh, Marian, your mother has been speculating too—yes,' he said, with a self-wounding laugh, 'in the same stocks as I, but on the opposite side—bull and bear—we both contrived to lose. She trusted the wrong brokers; was taken in by them. I don't quite know whether she could appear in court—would be a scandal—talked about!'

His poor conventional world was all a wreck, and tears ran down the white face.

'Do marry Mr Harland,' he said, almost childishly; 'he spoke so well, so like a Prince, when he came for my consent. Why shouldn't you? Shall I go down on my knees and ask you? I will, if you like.'

Her hand restrained him. In such moments thought has seven-leagued boots and travels over new country with the confidence of miracle. The ancient landmarks had disappeared. Marian did not know herself. She rose from her seat, took her poor father round the neck, and kissed him tenderly. He waited, still like a child.

'You have given me a new motive,' were the words he heard from those burning lips. 'I thought I was going to sacrifice myself to vanity, after my cousin had spoken to me. Father, I will give myself for *you*.

Mind, I am not in love with Mr Harland. Pray to God, if prayer is any use—that I may love my husband. I can't bear to think of you in the prisoner's dock.' She covered her eyes to shut out the fearful vision.—Mortals are mercifully blind to the future.

Mr Greystoke's life, which seemed to be ebbing while this interview went on, came back with a rush and a bound. He could have danced for joy. 'Oh, you will save us all, and me first,' he exclaimed in his transports; 'you are the angel of the house, the Greek girl in our books at Oxford—*Iphigenia in Aulis*—you fill our sails.'

'And raise the wind,' she said lightly, wanting him to calm down.

'Yes, and I am the happiest man alive. Shall I inform your mother now? Poor woman, she has suffered more than you would guess; she keeps a strong hand over her feelings.'

'Tell everybody,' said Marian; 'but don't let my mother hear of this conversation. And get Mr Harland to ask me as soon as possible to fix the day.'

When her father was gone on this joyous errand to Mrs Greystoke, the girl went down again by the river, hoping or fearing to meet Charlie Latimer. He was nowhere visible. What a misfortune! She could never write the explanation. No, nor perhaps give it in any way. Some things are beyond the resources of human language; they happen, they cannot be explained; friends fall away, long enmities are created, and the misunderstanding is for ever. There was simply no medium, no zone of feeling or expression, in which, face to face with her cousin, she could make him aware that his arguments kept their force, that she yielded to them, and yet with a tranquil conscience might accept Mr Harland's proposal. For she might; she was buying a bundle of lives dear to her with her own. In so complex a situation, what did she overlook? That Charlie was not the mere singing chorus, who would only praise or blame? That he, too, could act, and the stage was near enough for him to leap upon it and take

a strong, a decisive part, in the play? Perhaps, in real life, such oversights cannot be avoided; for we have no list of *dramatis personæ* given us beforehand; and it is only when the curtain falls that we know who the company of actors have been.

CHAPTER X

HONEY AND THE HONEYCOMB

MISS GREYSTOKE was now for hurrying the tempo of this unprecedented music which she had set so many instruments playing; and her affianced was nothing loth. And yet the actual day came to be decided by neither of them, but followed upon the moods and figures — to speak logicianwise — of Miss Harland's rather bizarre temperament. For she, sending a note to Marian not long after the great resolution of which we have just given an account, brought that lady back to Heathcote on a fine spring afternoon, and would not allow her to go home again.

'Lucas,' began the invalid, who seemed not only prostrate physically, but in a state of alarming mental depression, 'has taken himself off on one of his innumerable expeditions; and though the house is full of people, I am alone—worse than alone.' She peered cautiously round the room while speaking, with the air of one who dreads an apparition. 'My dear Marian, I can hardly bear even to think of Mrs Hendrik Henshaw; it is like brooding on a nightmare. Imagine what it costs me to entertain her as a guest all these weeks! I suffer night and day while she is under the same roof with me. But she is planted here, and go she will not. One day leads to another; she amuses people; my brother tolerates her, I suppose, with a view to some company business, at which the woman is diabolically expert. And she will be the death of me. To counteract the influence, stay. Why shouldn't you

be my companion really until we all go up to town for the wedding? Has the Vicar accepted Lord Curras's proposal that you should be married from their house?'

'He thinks it best. Of course I will stay with you, dear Miss Harland.'

'Letitia!' said the other pleadingly.

'Yes—Letitia—what a pretty old English name! Is Mrs Henshaw doing harm to anyone else?'

'I have been too languid to observe. Ah, that strange young man, your cousin, perhaps. She talks at him and about him in her unpleasant fashion. They say the men like it. Warn him to be on his guard. I know she has a bad name for spoiling youngsters. They're never much good after she has taken them in hand. She certainly has an *engouement* for Mr Latimer.'

This was distressing to Marian. 'I can't speak to Charlie,' said she, 'but why not break up the party by fixing as near a day as we can for—for the wedding? I would get Mrs Henshaw off the premises by giving her some large commissions in town; she likes them, I notice.'

'Yes, do. How decided you are, while I am quivering and helpless! Ah, it is everything to have a strong will; make the most of it, my love. Never let anyone dictate to you—not even Lucas; and don't *you* tolerate these lower species; they positively ray out disease and darkness.'

The stratagem succeeded. Perhaps Mrs Henshaw had bagged her game, and was not unwilling to turn homewards; she never pretended to be fond of the country or of country houses. 'I belong to Vanity Fair,' she said, 'and I like it crowded, at night, with all the lamps flaring, the drums beating, the roundabouts as full as they can hold. The country — a fox covert and a market garden!' She had taken to admiring Miss Greystoke immensely. 'My dear Marian,' she said with a frank smile, '—yes, you really must allow it to be, Marian, for old sake's sake — a woman who has beauty *and* genius ought to marry

a great fortune; it is yours by every right. We other plain, prosy creatures have our tens of thousands, *mais à quoi bon?* Can we get the man of our choice? Not always. Can we keep him if we get him? Ah, me! 'tis well to be you.'

Was it well? Cousin Charlie never paid another visit to Rylsford; and when Mrs Henshaw departed for her London house he went up by the same train, if not in the same carriage. As a matter of fact, he travelled in a smoking compartment; but he dined the same evening at La Scala—the slang term by which Vivian Lodge was known to its *habitués*. But why should he not dine there? Mr Vandyke and half a score of celebrated men were always dining there. They were on the best possible footing with Mrs Henshaw; and if some of them called her 'Pauline' when they discussed her amiable virtues, could anyone blame the lady, whose charm it was to give their Bohemian manners the distinction which art craves at all times, but which it has often to go without? She called most of them, too, by their Christian names; so she had her revenge.

And was it well for Marian to be wedding this paid-up capital in eighteen companies? Her own mind was now at rest—in the depths; but on the surface it was slightly agitated by a fear lest the shadow-song and the subsequent marriage should be construed as cause and effect—a cause designed to have that effect, and a perpetual slur upon her maidenliness. But hardly had she taken a step forward after the announcement became generally known, than she perceived, to her intense relief, that the adventure had been forgotten. Surely it was so. Her mother had changed beyond recognition. She did not learn from Mr Greystoke how nearly the marriage had been wrecked, or on what heroic motives her daughter was acting; but she knew enough to dissipate every cloud—nay, she almost wavered in what had for years at once awed and fascinated her, as she considered this unruly child—the silent but assured presentiment that Marian was neither

'called' nor 'chosen.' That High Calvinism which was her innermost nature now melted a little into doubt, let us say, it thawed from its eternal thick-ribbed ice into a watery surface whereupon yellow sunbeams played. Marian was marrying into an Evangelical house, and acquiring untold wealth; her paths would be paths of pleasantness and all her ways peace. Luckily for them both, no long interval divided the wedding from the engagement. Miss Greystoke was seldom at the Vicarage. And in future they would meet only where all the benefit was on the daughter's side.

As for the world, which Mr Harland's unexpected marriage filled with gossip, it did as it always will do; it sank on its knees and devoutly worshipped the Golden Calf. This young woman had won the biggest prize in the lottery—*Venite adoremus!* Men looked at her with admiration—how plucky and straightforward to take a man she had known only a month, and to make him take her. Every other woman she met would have been delighted to change places with her; she was safe inside the gates of that golden-paved city, where millionaires trod upon their own bullion, and desire was fulfilled, however extravagant, as soon as formed. She could buy anything and anyone she pleased. There was no end to the glory in the brightness of which she stood up, radiant, victorious. And now that with Mr Harland's cheques there was absolute *carte blanche* at her disposal, and she might have made all her acquaintance the handsomest presents, of course it became them to bring her tribute. They ran to the enterprise with hearty goodwill. From friends, from strangers, from kinsfolk, what an infinite of beautiful things came pouring into the town house which her cousin, Lord Curras, 'of the younger branch of Greystoke,' as he courteously described himself, had opened to receive her, and from which she was to be married at St Leonard's, Markington Square? The Society newspaper filled columns with the description of them, and the finest jewels and most cunningly-devised frocks were sketched and photographed, as if they had been

sent down express from the Heavenly Jerusalem to adorn the bride. Mr Browne Vandyke was in ecstasies. He looked on himself as the go-between, the match-maker—Sir Pandarus of Troy—to this proud alliance, which had in it something too sudden, too passionate, to be quite sane. The thought pleased him exceedingly. And as he was master of many friendships, as well as versatile in taste, he persuaded his dear companion in the ways of art, Sir Stormont Lanyon, to give him a promise that he would make the wedding into one of those highly classical yet modern pictures which, if they owed, as Sir Stormont did not deny, their marble translucency and untroubled lights to Alma Tadema, were yet palpitating with an impression caught in the very act. That was to eternise an event which the presence of Royalty would adorn, but scarcely by itself preserve from oblivion. It was said, of course, that Sir Stormont had borrowed money from Mr Harland, which money was now to be refunded in some square feet of colour. But the same thing was said even of attendant Royalty! What will not an idle world say?

And so it all passed. We take up our story once more at an equal distance from London and Rylsford—at Wynflete Abbey, on the rugged north-eastern coast, where Mr and Mrs Harland are spending their honey-moon. Lord Wootton had shown a deal of kindness in this matter. He approved, with military ardour, of the taste which his friend Lucas exhibited in choosing a wife at once handsome, brilliant, and audacious; he thought her quite equal to the fast American girls who were then in vogue, and the Greystokes were as old a house as the Woottons, and older than the Harlands. He thought they should be famous friends together. The young couple —well, not both young, he allowed, but Harland was uncommonly fresh-looking at forty—might enjoy Wynflete until they went abroad, if it suited them. He would run down occasionally and see that they wanted for nothing. There were schemes of business and

pleasure to be talked over; especially, as he said to Marian, musical schemes. 'But these your impresario —I mean your husband, ha, ha!—will lay before you at Wynflete. First-rate founders' shares — a matrimonial company like yours, eh? Harland Limited?'

However, unlike the usual pair of married lovers, who look on any third person in their paradise as the old serpent, these were not alone. Marian had prevailed on Miss Harland to share the Northern Eden; and, though Lucas, always an affectionate brother, was at first unwilling that their duet should be exchanged for a trio, he liked the girl's proposing it, and gave in with much suavity. Letitia was touched. 'I shall see you begin your happy days,' she said to Marian; 'it will help me to imagine them when I am living in my lonely widowhood, away from you both.'

Her new sister was not one of those who ride into their kingdom over trampled captives. She said, with some hesitation, after a pause, 'I wanted to ask you if you would mind just going on with us in your old way, not changing at all—living with us in town and at Heathcote as long as you found it agreeable? That is what I should like.'

'Wouldn't my brother think I had put it into your head, my dear? Men don't much care, in England, about this sort of *ménage à trois*. The French seem to get happiness out of it.'

'We shall, too. I want someone to keep me from making mistakes in this tremendous position. I feel as if I had gone up in a balloon, and did not understand the machinery. Be my chaperon, and I will be your younger sister—a little wayward and wilful, perhaps, but I can learn.'

The bargain was struck. Possibly Mr Harland would have preferred to train Marian himself, had not his busy brain found occupation enough, or too much, in the deep waters of speculation, where he was now the owner of vessels beyond counting, and liable to good or ill fortune in every latitude. This seventh heaven of a honeymoon could not keep him in its silken meshes

always. He was backwards and forwards to London; had appointments in Manchester, Leeds, or Glasgow; lived long days on the railway, and drove up at night, panting, happy, full of new schemes, to the gates of Wynflete. He did not neglect Marian; he was much in love, and overflowing with kindness; but she began to have her lonely hours, quite as in the forlorn garret when her visions were the one escape from melancholy.

At present she did not feel forlorn. It was enjoyable to move about the Abbey, to walk down by the changing sea, which on certain mornings melted into a sunlit cloud—the waters taking on themselves an appearance of ruddy golden air—to read among the ruins, grass-grown, silent, friendly, which crowned that bold height, and to shape at intervals some of those generous plans regarding her family, to which Harland was prompting her. She had never lived in a house so full of associations with the past as Wynflete, or so finished in all its appointments; to go over it all was much the same as making out a second romance, with which her own was mingling. Who could forecast how the lights would tell on each other in the final composition?

Wynflete was an Abbey of Black Monks, the name dating from the earliest Saxon times, when it had been a convent of women, governed by the Princess Ethelgifa. It stood on a bluff which protected from the sea by its great boulder of dark iron-stone the little town, bearing the same name, that nestled in a cup or hollow, through which ran into the tiny harbour a stream called the Mure. A town such as Dickens would have created in his dreams—crooked little streets, with old-world names, such as the Vineyard, Grape Court, Murdock Fence—winding and very steep lanes, houses tumbled against one another, some red brick, some timber-framed, many of a discoloured plaster tint, dun white or dirty yellow; with gables, sign boards, shops lying back from the pavement into which you went headlong down steps; the quaintest quays in the world on both

sides of the river; a couple of bridges that lifted up to let the fishing-smacks, trawlers, or whatever they were, go through; booths of rough canvas set out along the quays, having much the appearance of a fair or a gipsy settlement; and on the flags you would remark the great fish with silver-shining scales flung down, which had been brought in out of the fog and mist and screaming tempests so frequent on that perilous coast. A big sail would have covered Wynflete; it was a town in a toy box, a picture complete in itself to which nothing could be added—warm and cheerful looking, not the least bit modern, lively all day and until a pretty late hour at night; as sequestered as if it were playing a game all to itself. Marian never forgot the picturesque face which it put on, under a westering sun, after an unusually clear day, when Lucas and herself drove through, and across the upper drawbridge, on their way from the station to the Abbey.

This, standing aloft, distinct and lonely as a light-house, had that inspiring grandeur which we feel in whatever seems a visible means of escape from places shut in, as was the town of Wynflete. The Abbey Church remains still — roofless indeed, open to the weather, and much decayed on the eastern side, which sea storms had pitilessly broken. Round about, the green mounds indicated where the cloisters and out-buildings had fallen or been pulled down. The house now known as Wynflete was the Abbot's, greatly altered, and connected by covered garden walks with the ruins —a beautiful specimen of the restored, with the sea stretching out endlessly towards the morning sky in front.

'And what is this?' said Marian to her husband on a certain day as they entered a square building, separate from the mansion, though accessible through broad passages, 'a theatre? Yes, there is the stage, here the orchestra, the galleries. Did Lord Wootton build it?'

'No, it is part of the monastic buildings which were not pulled down. A very fine theatre it makes; capital for sound, and, as you see, beautifully proportioned. I

believe it was the monks' chapter room. One could wish it larger.'

Marian looked round; it was very perfect; the great oaken beams and pointed windows, with their clear tracery, not overloaded, gave it an air of distinction. 'I should like to act in a play here sometime,' she said.

'Well, why not? Lord Wootton is fond of amateur theatricals—not that he acts himself, of course. We shall be often staying in this house. But one of these days we mean to astonish the market. We have designs on Gerard Elven in this very place.'

'Gerard Elven! The wonderful dramatic composer whose song I gave—do you remember it?—in your drawing-room the first night we met.'

'Do I remember? Yes, Elven might be coaxed down here, and one of his dramas privately acted under our management. He is a shy bird; still, now the poor Princess is not there to give them, he has no other outlook.'

'What Princess? I never heard the story. Tell it me.'

'Too long now. The Princess Helen of Ferrara; she died out of her mind. But she *was* Gerard Elven's patroness, guardian angel, good fairy. You know all about Rosenberg?'

'I know nothing. Do sit down and sketch it for me. I want to be acquainted with Gerard Elven.'

'You will be; he is sure to fall into the hands of the Philistines unless we come to his relief. I daresay we shall meet this year. But the story of his life would run through half a dozen volumes. And I must be off.'

He left Marian happy, with a scarlet thread of romance to wind and unwind, as she mused upon the mighty poet and musician whose fame had echoed even into dead Rylsford. This was the kind of man she should be meeting henceforth — not only well-mannered, choice in word and bearing, but of the race of the gods. And she owed it to Harland. She would be fond of him; nay, she liked him thoroughly now; if

he was not the rose, he dwelt near the rosebush, and he would be always bringing her blossoms. Elven—what a bouquet of colour and perfume! The supreme poet of tone, and an incomparable writer of the new musical drama—it was something to look forward to! 'Yes, my impresario, Lord Wootton! Is he not very good?' She would fancy herself saying those words, and meaning them.

'The spring came slowly up that way.' It was a month behind Heathcote; and she watched the buds unfolding with a tender concern, thinking how this lovely line of vegetation travelled as a wave from south to north. She was much in the garden with Miss Harland, or on the seashore, crunching the sand deliciously under foot, drinking in the fine air. Sometimes a fit of merriment would take her, and she danced barefoot in the white wash of the tide like a girl of thirteen. Delight with Marian Greystoke always showed itself in animated gesture; she must move her limbs, sing, recite, play, when happiness came in as a flood.

And late one afternoon she was alone, in the theatre, on the stage, having drawn aside the drop scene; and, making believe that she had in front of her that astonished audience at Mintern, she began to sing the shadow-song, repeating her dainty steps, and improving on them, with a sense of great good-humour and large happiness. A door opened quietly at the end of the room. Marian stopped short in her dramatising and felt confused. Who could it be? It was a servant bearing a card, on which she read the name of Latimer.

The man himself followed hard upon it. He looked up at the open stage and the figure arrested in its airy motions; then mounted the steps, took a long stride forward, and fell unawares into the position of the *primo tenore*, or first walking gentleman, addressing the heroine. His cousin put out her hand; he took it reluctantly, and let it fall. She was deeply offended.

Then she glanced at his face again, and her feeling changed to compassion. He had gone through some indescribable experience which was stamped in the

livid colour of his cheek, in his tired and half-quenched eyes, and, to her sudden grief and horror, in some threads of white hair—snow-white—which shone out, as it were dead, among his yellow locks, just above his left ear. He seemed to be taller and thinner.

'Oh, Charlie, how ill you must have been!' she exclaimed. 'What has become of you all this time? We wrote to The Farm; we could get no news.'

'I saw Mr Harland some days ago in Nicholas Lane,' he said. His voice was low, and its chords broken or hoarse.

'He did not mention it.'

'No, I begged him to keep it between ourselves. I wanted to call here.'

'Why, Charlie, that is kind. You will stay the night? Come, let me see to your wants,' leading the way down from the stage. He motioned with his head.

'Wait until I have spoken. I shall not stay. You won't want me to stay.' Marian came back slowly; this open wound would not heal, it appeared.

'I did not accept the invitation to your—wedding,' he continued, with an effort. 'And I sent no excuse. I was ill, in my lodgings in town—ill enough. I read no letters, and wrote none.'

'But why in town? Who was attending on you? Oh, Charlie, you ought to have let us know.'

'Let you know, Marian? I beg your pardon'—faltering. 'I never thought to call you by that name any more. No, never any more! Mrs Henshaw attended on me.'

'Mrs Henshaw! And she sent us not the slightest message!'

'That was my doing. I forbade any message. Thanks to her most tender nursing, I escaped a brain fever. Was it well? Who knows? I wish I had died.' He fixed his eyes gloomily on the floor and walked down to the footlights. It was as if the stage compelled him to adopt its ways. And in a moment or two he spoke—out into the empty circle before him, not looking at Marian, who had come down a few steps, anxious and

uncertain what to do next. 'I am going to marry Mrs Henshaw.'

'What!' she said, in an awestruck whisper, 'marry —a divorced woman?'

'That is it,' he answered. 'She can marry again. Mrs Henshaw—Pauline—has been shamefully slandered. She is a kind-hearted creature—and she loves me—not like you, Marian.'

This was too unexpected for any words. There was no taking it in.

'You know, Charlie,' said his cousin at length in her embarrassment—'you know you don't love Mrs Henshaw.'

He was in a tremor from head to foot. 'Did you—do you—love the man you have taken for a husband? Remember that day in the Vicarage garden. Aren't you perjured?'

'I can't—I can't explain,' she said, with burning eyes and throat. 'Believe me, Charlie, if I could, you would judge me differently. Other things came in—not in my power to tell you—else I would never have consented—'

'Of course,' he said contemptuously, 'you found some reason. I don't wish to know it. As for Pauline, I do feel towards her—not as I did to you, Marian,' he broke out almost sobbing. 'Oh, is it past? It never, never will be past. But that love is buried—buried alive. I told Mrs Henshaw—not your name, only how I felt about someone; and she—what a generous creature she is!—she said, "I don't expect you to care for me all that much. I would sooner be neglected by you than adored by any other man." She did, Marian; and now we are going to be married. I came to tell you.'

Silence. How could she speak, or offer any argument? They lingered, motionless, while day seemed to be dying languidly. Then he spoke again,—

'There is something more. I don't pretend to forgive your tempter—Harland. He dazzled you with his wealth; you could not resist it. I had no money. But I mean

to have as much as Harland has got—and to beat him at his own game. Last week Pauline wrote me a cheque for twenty thousand pounds. I took it into the city; I called on your husband.' Marian started and lost the glow of colour which had dyed her cheek while he spoke to her so scornfully. 'Mr Harland was good enough to give me some sensible advice, which I obeyed; and I now have over thirty thousand pounds. That is the beginning of my war-chest. Was it clever, to learn from the enemy? Tell him the whole thing if you like; he will be none the better defended against me. I don't in any way consider it mean or unmanly. Do you suppose Harland has made his millions above board? Ask those who know him most intimately. He is a financial harpy, a scoundrel of the deepest dye. And I intend to pull him down. But I shall not touch *you;* Pauline wants to be your friend. We shall invite you to our wedding. Afterwards—things will be as they must be.'

He was down the steps as he uttered the last words, and went unsteadily out of the chapter room.

For the first and last time in her life Marian Greystoke fainted.

BOOK II

LIBRA THE BALANCE

I saw the worlds that march along the sky
Move to a rhythmic dance and measure slow
The while a thousand ages come and go,
And men in myriads suffer, pine and die;
Nor yet may discords mar that music high,
Of one vast tide the eternal ebb and flow,
That amid change and chance no change doth know,
A sphere self-centred, living harmony.

And at the centre, lo, what Angel stands,
Holding the scales wherein all things are laid,
The elements that make the seas and lands,
Men's lives, and thoughts, and deeds—their light and shade—
Down to the smallest grain and sands of sands!
Thus in God's balance True and False are weighed.

CHAPTER XI

FORGET-ME-NOTS

HAD this new-wedded lady—so I am instructed by the wizard science of physiognomy—been a blonde, 'in appointment fresh and fair,' she might have conquered the trouble now driving at her, and intending the ruin of all her house, by simple sheer indifference. Taking Charlie Latimer's talk for brain fever transmuting itself to violent speech, and so wasting ineffectually, and satisfied to do her duty in that state of life, as her Catechism admonished her, why should she not be the fortunate, the fashionable, the envied Mrs Harland? a goddess in her husband's right, a Juno Moneta, gilt from top to toe, dazzling in the splendour of her beams, the five senses satisfied, and vanity, which wise men call the sixth, eating its delicate pabulum day by day out of vessels borne in a procession that was never ending, aye beginning, made up from every set in the social order? To her misfortune, she was a *brune*, dark in complexion, irritable or sanguine-bilious in temperament—detestable doctors' words, yet alone appropriate! There was reflection behind instinct, thought working on passion, and an infinite faculty of self-torture in this strong, unruly spirit. Her way of fighting down the disagreeable was not to pass it by in freezing disdain; she must grapple it to her heart and slay it there. This rending of the serpent that is striking its fangs into you may be highly picturesque and a subject for immortal sculpture; but the venom, once mixing with the blood, is beyond reach of antidote. Would it have been well, then—if the Greek story-teller is right, and we

were all, before our entrance into the present stage, given a choice of lives or tempers, in a pre-natal market of souls—had Marian snatched up some fair-haired damsel's mask, a doll's face, a pair of congealed blue eyes, and a wooden smile? But then, I doubt if Mr Harland had married her; and my chess-board, beginning with another set of pieces, must have exhibited quite a different game.

It was her task henceforward to bear the troubles of the brunette as well as she knew how; and, after a single unaffected swoon, which lasted five minutes, she rose, greatly shaken, but resolute. Never would she let disaster come in by this door, if she could help it. Metaphorically, she locked it at once—double locked it, and put the Bluebeard key upon her heart, whence it could not be taken without her knowledge. She felt its pressure day and night—sometimes it took an edge and cut to the bone, or it became suddenly pointed, and stabbed her through. The victory of the nervous temper is also a martyrdom. *N'importe;* she could suffer—that was no new thing; but she would neither betray her cousin, making mischief the end of which it was impossible to see, nor decline Mrs Henshaw's proferred friendship—a means this, perhaps, of learning what was devised against her husband, and of breaking its force.

But the honey was eaten, the honeycomb melted. She felt about her a flame of gold which burned her flesh grievously. They had only a little more time to stay at Wynflete Abbey. Into the fatal chapter room, where Latimer had come upon her dancing, she never so much as looked again. The beautiful sea, a grey, green, silver, crimson, or sapphire plain, now transparent, afterwards heavy as lead, always like the beginning of a mystery that called her on to search out its meaning, had this peculiar attraction—it did not speak of the past, it was unconcerned about to-morrow. She went down to it every day, she made it a friend. Wynflete was, after all, a resting-place in the desert. Yet she wanted to be gone. The new enemy in London

would not sleep. As soon as Mrs Henshaw had made up her mind to be Mrs Latimer, it was clear that she had entered into the young man's designs. They must get back to town as quickly as possible. The season—which hitherto had signified no more in the Greystoke arrangements than if they were Eskimo living in snow huts and feeding on blubber—was coming to a close. Mr Harland thought of giving his bride a turn in the long-desired picture gallery and promenade known as Venice, Florence and Naples. She would plead for a few weeks at Fenimore Place, and not move out of England until the Latimers—'the Latimers!' she repeated incredulously to herself—were on the wing. And so much, by good fortune, she effected.

It was on the first evening after she had taken possession, with a sad heart, of her London palace, that the cards of invitation came, actually with the announcement in the newspapers of her cousin's engagement. They arrived during dinner, while Guido's Aurora smiled down amid the lights from overhead. Mr Harland, immersed in the details of the new Missionary Syndicate, then at an interesting but difficult period of its existence, had not, that day, run his eye along the fashionable columns of any journal; and, when he saw what the post had brought him, he broke into a loud laugh.

'Hooked, by Jove!' he exclaimed. 'Madame Pauline has caught her fish. He will be eaten with a lively sauce. What kind of man is your cousin, Marian? I thought him a sulky young fellow—and not very sober.'

'He has plenty of character,' said Marian, gravely. 'He doesn't drink—he was sickening for a bad illness when you saw him at Heathcote. Oh, he will be quite a match for Mrs Henshaw.'

'You think that?' said Miss Harland. 'My dear, the woman will drag him down to her level. "As the husband is the wife is," I don't believe to be true. The wife, in this case, is a man-eating demon. She will suck his blood and pick his bones, and look quite fresh and smiling afterwards.'

'But can we accept their invitation?' asked Marian.

'As a clergyman's daughter can you countenance the marriage of a divorcée?' inquired Letitia, reflectively. 'I sha'n't go myself; but I am an invalid.'

'It is a point to consider,' observed Lucas. 'If we are seen there, it may affect the shares of the Missionary Syndicate. True, we can plead social duties, and Latimer is your cousin. Nor do I quite like to offend Mrs Henshaw; she can give a nasty back-hander sometimes.'

'But is it right, Lucas, for a divorced woman to marry again?' said his wife in a low voice. The hard, commercial view which his words unrolled before her, dusty and waterless as an Australian plain, seemed to hurt something within, she could not have explained why. Her own thoughts, since Latimer's visit to Wynflete, had been dwelling on this other hateful aspect of a marriage in every way undesirable; and she was hoping Mr Harland would condemn it, though she knew well they must not refuse the cards.

'Right?' he said musingly, 'right? Why, my dear child, I will answer with Portia, the woman lawyer, "The court awards it, and the law doth give it." Every marriage is right that can be registered; this marriage can be registered; *ergo*, this marriage is right. There's the law and the logic of it for you,' he concluded, laughing at his own wit.

'But the Prayer Book says, "till death do us part,"' objected Marian. She wanted him to answer, not her argument, which was merely the outward show of a feeling too deep for words, so much as the inherited consciousness of an iniquity attaching to divorce altogether—and besides, she did not allow that Mrs Henshaw could have been the injured innocent whom Charlie had taken at her own price.

'"Death or the Divorce Court," would be more exact, you think? We can't go by phrases, Marian. Mrs Henshaw is pretty; she has no end of dollars; and she owns to thirty-one, while men give her a couple of years more, and women, how many?'—to his

sister. 'At anyrate, she is too young for everlasting widow's weeds. She and Henshaw are parted. When love goes out at the window, the wife had better go out at the door. Kill the love, you may put a decent tombstone over the marriage. That's what I say, Marian. The other view won't work at all. What is poor Mrs Henshaw to do with her beauty and her dollars? She can't go and take the veil. Society prefers Pauline without a veil.'

He was very gay that evening, but while Marian sang to him—rather more out of voice than either of them liked, although they said nothing about it, being still on lovers' terms—he was balancing the pros and cons of their appearance at the wedding. When she had shut down the piano and turned round on the music-stool to look in his direction, he said, with a ripple of amusement in his tone,—

'We shall have to see your cousin turned off, my dear. I dread these missionary fellows—though some of them, out in the tropics, are said to be a bit polygamous—but having the fear of Mrs Henshaw before my eyes, the other risk must be run. She is equal to a May meeting in herself. I shall put a few thousand shares in our Syndicate on the happy pair.'

Thus was the celebrated case of Mrs Hendrik Henshaw's second marriage, debated vehemently before it took place and afterwards—to the astonishment, and no less the rage, of Charlie Latimer, who asked indignantly, 'What, in the devil's name, have people got to do with me and my wife? The law says she is my wife; what more do they want?' If the ceremony could have taken place in a registrar's office, there would have been no outcry. But Pauline had always resolved on being 'led to the altar,' as she declared, in the state and splendour of a bride, with the world looking on and all things done decently and in order. 'My first wedding day,' she said sweetly, 'was the happiest day of my life, and I do so want to compare it with my second. I am quite looking forward

to the *rapprochement!*' But other less light-minded persons were asking the British public whether it was endurable that a woman, against whom sentence had been pronounced—for such was the case in Iowa—with a husband still living, could present herself before a clergyman and be allowed the benefit of the holy rite. Religious newspapers discussed the matter from their point of view, bringing to bear upon the imperturbable Pauline (it is true she did not read them) history and Canon Law, the Councils and the Fathers of the Church, and drawing a melancholy inference from this new departure, as they termed it, in the customs of Society. For a wedding in church with all the pomp of innocence was, in fact, to defy the established rule, that such marriages must be solemnised privately, if at all. And figures proved that divorce with re-arrangement of partners, as in the mythical German whist party, was becoming more and more frequent. Journals not held to be religious—though often quite as much so as their devout-seeming brethren—wondered if a clergyman could be found bold enough to decline, or to venture upon, pronouncing the nuptial benediction. And so Charlie Latimer, without merit of his own, became what is termed a celebrity, and Mrs Henshaw's photograph was in all the shop windows. She took her station there with great equanimity. Nor did she fail to point out, when the young man fumed and swore—which was only for want of acquaintance with the resources of the English language—that, as regards his great design on Mr Harland, nothing could have happened which would give him a speedier admittance, as a marked man, into the world of finance.

'Notoriety is the tail of the kite we fly nowadays, Charlie,' she said, 'to succeed you must be known; it doesn't much matter how.'

St Mary Magdalene's, Eyton Crescent, was the scene chosen for this trial of the new morality *versus* the old. Hither came both parties, arrayed very unlike one another, on the appointed day. Mrs Henshaw's friends, allies and admirers, reinforced by the troops which Mr

Harland led into action—he unwilling, them not reluctant—were conspicuous in all their bravery, the men a little shy, and wondering if it was quite their business to interfere in causes matrimonial at noonday, the women adorned as in the medieval Court of Love, eager and excited, some in their hearts condemning the too venturesome bride-elect, others rejoicing as in a day of freedom, long but vainly hoped for. The new morality had a balance at its bankers so enormous that it would have charmed austerest virtue—the keeper of the Royal conscience himself—to look in another direction while it was taking this fence on its golden-winged Pegasus. But where was the ancient, rusty, ungallant stoicism which condemned Mrs Henshaw to a grass widowhood all the rest of her days? Present in the stiff backs and staring eyes of certain black-vestured women, who, apparently, as Pauline murmured, giving them their stare again with supreme calmness, never would have any chance of being divorced. Some grave-looking gentlemen were standing about, nervous and agitated, who, as it was not difficult to guess, had also come on behalf of British virtue, and might be valiant, but were certainly dejected. Had they a captain to lead them? If so, he was nowhere visible.

The church could hold no more. Benches were crammed, nave and aisles one great furnace of human suffering, all heads turned the same way; and as for the gallery, it threatened to come down with its freight on the multitude below. Marian, seated by her husband, glanced from time to time at Charlie Latimer, who stood there erect and pale, the very marble which his Pauline thought so captivating by its coldness. He had looked towards his cousin once—his lost love—but the blood left his heart and he dared not look again. Near at hand was Mr Browne Vandyke, in an admirable mixture of colours, a lesson in good taste to the throng, had they cared to study esthetics that morning; but the excitement of the spectator is an enemy to the Fine Arts.

Mr Fairchild, the officiating clergyman, was punctual to the stroke of the clock. While hearts beat faster and

conversation ceased, he took Prayer Book in hand, began the exhortation in a subdued, somewhat inarticulate voice, as the manner is, and, said Charlie Latimer afterwards, went straight as a beagle to the end. Latimer and Pauline knelt, according to the rubric, while Mr Fairchild, joining their hands, said in his milkiest tones, 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' At these words a singular impression passed through the audience, as when the trees are stirred by the wind. They had been uttered over the kneeling lady on a previous occasion.

But no thunder broke through the roof, no lightning flashed. The crowds poured out; the guests went streaming into their carriages to Vivian Lodge — the Harlands among them—and large and mellow the wedding chimes floated on the air. Pauline, shaking her wings like a bird, was the gayest of the gay. At breakfast—for they kept a light and gracious sketch, as it were in water-colours, of the ponderous old institution—she chatted right and left, twittered and chirped, sparkled with smiles and epigrams.

'And, oh!' she cried to the friends who sat near her, 'don't you admire my lovely bracelets? Dead gold, finely wrought, and forget-me-nots in turquoise, my favourite colour! I found them when we came from church. Guess—guess, my dear Marian—*my* cousin now—who sent them! You can't? Then read the delicious little note.' And Marian read, on a tiny sheet of scented paper, 'To dear Pauline. With Mr and Mrs Hendrik Henshaw's united kind regards and best wishes.' She was struck dumb, in a sort of stupefaction; but the bride chirped and chatted. 'So sweet of them, wasn't it? The very day! And to remember my favourite colour! I always did say Robbie could do the nicest things when he wasn't in a temper—lesson to you, Charlie dear!' And she beamed on him. But he was thinking of those days in his London lodgings, when she sat by his bedside and talked quietly, and was affectionate and such a tender nurse. He let her run on a little now; it did not matter; that was the way of a

winged thing that must pour out its heart. She might have a dozen bracelets and an acre of forget-me-nots; she belonged to Charlie Latimer now.

At dinner, a few days afterwards, Mr Harland, with bitter facetiousness, observed to his womankind, 'I thought we should have to pay double fees to Mr Fairchild. Our Missionary shares went down four points yesterday and five this morning. My position as Chairman is too strong to be upset; but they talk of a rival Company, and the wash of correspondence in the *Times* about Pauline's marriage will give a fine opening for their prospectus. I tell our crew of pressmen not to answer on any provocation; it's oil on the fire. I am half sorry I went. But the Bishop is standing to his guns; and with a Bishop to back us, we shall carry off our wounded.'

Latimer did not trouble much about the skirmishing in the *Times*, but he read his City article day after day, and smiled grimly. The religious Syndicate was badly hurt; he had drawn first blood. His new and undreamt-of wolfish instinct, awakened by the taste, warm on the lips, and smarting as if it were salt, grew to a passion; its very vehemence promised strength, foreboded victory. In dealing with Mr Lucas Harland, he felt no scruples. The man thought gold was irresistible. Perhaps it would be so—but on which side? That they would see. Meanwhile Mr Harland was paying the piper, and he had not called the tune.

CHAPTER XII

THE SNOWS OF YESTER YEAR

NOW that my story is opening before me, I feel like a man that, lying at his ease on deck, is travelling down some beautiful American river, the Hudson or the Juniata, or voyaging over Lake Champlain, and, as he takes in with half-shut eyes the glories of the scene, bright or dusk, he wonders to himself how he shall describe the thousandth part of them to friends at home. For he sees so much and can say so little. And I see and know, concerning the actors in this modern drama, so many things which I am not able to tell—the public, no less than the publisher, declining stories that run to the length of Japanese romance in a score of volumes. Yet this it is which gives what would otherwise be admittedly simple and true in one's narrative — this choosing out and carving, and dovetailing, and fitting piece to piece, I say, which lends to solid fact an air too symmetrical and unreal, as if it were literally fiction, or a making up, and not the evidence of a witness that has kissed the Bible. I mean as thus :—

In the succeeding stage of her trial or education, Mrs Harland experienced, or tasted, not only all that is here set down in the *menu*, but much else, and of a most varied kind. And all this had its proper effect, or, to change the expression, she was acting in several plays at once—how many parts! She had her duties as a woman of fashion, as the wife of one of the kings of finance, as a sister and a daughter, as a Sunday Christian, and also as an artistic tempera-

ment, keenly sensitive not to music only, or the theatre, or painting, or minor touches of the decorative style, or stanzas of the poets new and old, or strong situations in current literature, but to life itself considered reflectively—much as though whatever she did were shown to her in a glass, and subject to the laws of looking-glass country. This, I know not whether quite accurately, is often described as the temperament into which all we moderns are born; it is the self-conscious, dramatising, philosophic—fine names we give our favourite weakness; but, says old Montaigne, *l'homme se pipe*, man loads his own dice, like the inveterate cheat he has always been—and so, let us call it how we will, it is a double existence (chasing its image through many mirrors), which has thrown upon the contemporary stage lights most bewitching and a dance of rainbows.

Under these conditions, who can snatch out the one real life that was lived by Mrs Harland, strip it of its glamour, reduce it to truthful black and white, and hold it up critically to view? I am doing what lies in me to bring all this out. But will the kind-hearted reader do his share as well? You, for instance, my dear Ralph, fresh from the heights of San Juan and Santiago, to whom I am writing much of this, as to a young modern, with years before you, and necessity laid on your valiant shoulders to understand what the twentieth century is likely to do and to be? For the nineteenth, as pictured in our great and famous authors, is already past—ancient history, an old almanack—the yesterdays that we have ground up into our wheat from Indiana or the Ukraine, and into the smokeless gunpowder of those battles wherein knowledge conquers ignorance, though ignorance, doubled with holiness, were armed in complete steel.

Well, well, to the next reach in the river! But no, it is a lake, and not Lake Champlain, but the deep lapis lazuli of the Lago Maggiore, and a Sunday evening, tranquil with long lights in a heaven of rose or violet; and our tragedians *sans le savoir*—the quar-

tette who must dance this dance together—are dining, talking, watching life in their several ways, at lovely Luino; the solemn waters spread in front of them, the green verandah trellised in vine leaves, and a faded fresco serving as tapestry on the wall of this alcove, where fruit and wines are set out on a long table.

They all seem happy as feasting gods. Mr Harland, sharp and calculating, mixes money with his observations on the art of Italy, which he has been displaying to Marian in its dead museums—cities that even English companies, lighting them with electric splendour, can but turn into Pompeii beheld under a ghostly moon. His young wife, though secret diffidence in the future is gnawing at her bosom, laughs healthily, and sparkles up into bright little sayings, with the readiness, and even the interest, that conversation stirs in an essentially dramatic nature, alive, despite any trouble, to the scene before it. Mrs Charlie Latimer—'so call her now, her former name is heard no more in heaven'—who caresses where afterwards she will bite and scratch, keeps up this battledore and shuttlecock with Marian, wonders how people lived in those prison palaces, behind thick walls, dungeons groaning underneath their banquets, and did not go mad, or, perhaps, they did go mad; what signifies the wildness that was an ingredient of all Renaissance tragedies! And Charlie, smoking his eternal cigarettes, either listens or does not listen; he has none of this small change in hand, but they know that talk is not in his line. He can always look handsome, now that he has recovered from his illness. '*Oh che bel' uomo!*' cry the Italian lasses, and even graver folk, as they see him striding along in the white tennis things that give him the appearance as of an angel, painted by some pre-Raphaelite in an old altar-piece. The touch of sickness laid on his pale cheek adds a charm; it is consumptive beauty, hiding a stern purpose like some silken mantle flung across the knight's glittering breastplate.

Harland, well read in the looks of men, has re-

marked him, and said to Marian, 'I thought your cousin little better—pardon me—than a tippling farmer at Heathcote. He is not such a fool as I imagined. *Ce garçon ira loin!* He has a head for business, and doesn't chatter.' The girl felt uncomfortable. Should she speak? Then they would quarrel, or not quarrel, but mine and countermine. It was a bitter drop in her new-found happiness that they must all have met at Luino. While she and Harland were moving about alone, and the Latimers had not gone back to London, but still were not with them, the thunder was sleeping, the Bluebeard chamber locked. Bad enough to travel with this troop of dark fancies always about her, but worse to be seeing the silent Charlie, and to know that even Harland felt an influence stored up in that fierce nature, which was far from despicable.

'Let us take a turn on the strand,' says Latimer, starting to his feet.

Out they move, and down a little way, and they are pacing about, enchanted by the melting tones of water and atmosphere; by the long bluish gloom into which all the hard realities of daytime are now evaporating; by the orange tint far above on the mountain snows; by the curious plashing of the million frogs in the reeds, and their incessant croaking as of a violent rain coming down upon the Lake; by the bits of brown sail idling in the air purposeless, and by the sound of children at play some distance off, in front of the greyish-white church. Mrs Charlie takes the financier to herself, and moves pensively onward. Marian walks with her cousin. The light talk of the dinner-table has faded into a mood of monosyllables, meaning much or little, mere tuning of instruments for the piece that will come by-and-by.

'It was pleasant sailing to-day out there,' says Marian, timidly, and not at her ease. 'Cannero, Laveno—bouquets of roses and camellias mixed—what pictures! —and the contrast of the two banks—the quiet green, the glowing snows! I hope you feel stronger now, Charlie.'

Charlie says nothing awhile, then throws his cigarette into the water.

'You mean that you wish I was dead. I sha'n't die yet.'

'How you are changed!' she remarks, with a sigh. 'There was a time—I never told you—when you had just come home from South Africa—you looked so like—so like a hero in one of the story books, and you were ever so kind then. For a couple of months,' she went on, laughing, as though to pass it off, in a subdued tone, 'I thought I was in love with you.'

'Don't,' he muttered; 'you will make me worse than I am. Can't you let it alone?'

'I only wanted you to know I was not so heartless, after all. Mayn't we be friends now? Do let us—and I am quite willing to like Pauline. She *is* good to you.'

'We never can be friends until I have brought him to his knees.' The other couple were out of earshot. 'I blame you for accepting him; but why did he tempt a penniless girl? Just because he knew he could buy you. He didn't reckon up the full price.'

She turned her face to the russet heaven of the Alpine snows, as asking pity; but the sky was all light and emptiness.

'Charlie,' she said beseechingly, 'you think I had a choice; but I had none. I can't talk to you about it. Surely, in our situation at home—my father—why do you say I was bought?'

He stopped abruptly, and laid his hand on her shoulder. 'You have been married three months. If you can swear to me—here on this spot—that you feel for Harland as you know I feel for you—see, my plans are gone, chucked away, like this,' and he opened his hand, flinging from him the fresh cigarette he was holding.

The poor girl opened her lips in anguish, breathed heavily, and the next instant would have told that lie, but he put his hand before her mouth. 'That will do.

I can see it in your eyes. Don't perjure yourself. You won't save Harland.'

'What are you taking my name in vain for?' cried Harland, turning round; he had caught the sound of it, like a flash of significant colour out of a fog.

'I was asking if your debentures are at a premium?' said Latimer, drily. Marian could have sobbed.

'No, worse luck; they've gone down steadily since a certain wedding. But now's your time, Latimer, buy them up for Pauline; they're bound to rise.'

Charlie was quite aware of that; he had not waited for Mr Harland's advice, and Pauline knew the market. But she merely traced lines in the sand with her parasol and murmured, 'Business on the Sabbath day! Oh, you men, how worldly you are! Marian, look at the silver spear deep down in that purple—isn't it astonishing! I can fancy a sword coming up to us out of the lake, the point just at Mr Harland's waistcoat. See, it's wonderfully real!'

Mrs Harland fell back with Charlie again. 'I won't speak any falsehood,' she began tremulously, 'but if I am not—in love—that way—still, I mean to be a good wife. No one could be kinder than my husband. Why should everyone feel those — tremendous passions? They don't seem to do much good.'

'You don't love him; and some day you will leave him. Yes, you will. It isn't likely a girl of your sort'—he devoured her dark beauty with his eyes—'should be satisfied with milk and water. You'll be wanting champagne some day. Whenever the right man comes along, good-bye, Mrs Harland! I haven't fed on your looks for nothing, day and night, asleep and awake, these two years. That is why, in this business, I count you and him as separate. He owns you, but he hasn't got you. I wouldn't—I wouldn't,' he reiterated with a sudden outburst of passion and a flushed countenance, 'I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head. What is Harland to you? Less than that,' and he puffed away the blue smoke from his lips.

Could she but have told that saving lie! Casuists,

what say you? But she was of a truthful nature, and herein lay the secret even of her supreme ability as an artist; she saw things too clearly to render them out of proportion. She must be candid in her own mind—and delusion absent there, it was impossible to smirk and smile and assume either a virtue or a vice that in herself she could not discover. Gladly would she have felt a passion such as Charlie insisted upon for Mr Harland. Why, then, did it not come at her call? Now or never was the time of love with her; would the roses decline to bloom? Under this radiant sky of the south, in marble loggias, with orange trees scenting the cloistered gardens, the grave and beautiful statues gazing upon her as she passed, a world of colour ravishing her sight, and the air soft and balmy, ought she not to be falling in love for mere love's sake, fixing her dreams and turning them to delightful earnest, in the man who was the merchant of these pleasures—always attentive, kind, amusing, the best of everyday companions, and certainly devoted?

But there she stopped. Companion, hardly friend—something came between them. Until the evening talk at Luino brought this into fatal prominence, she had not dared to tell herself the truth. She did, now and then, complain of his loudish tones, as wanting in sympathy. And there was a purple mask — singular phenomenon—a flush and change of outline, descending from the forehead to the chin, swift as a fleet of ripples on the water, which blotted out Mr Harland's usually agreeable features, when he happened to be vexed with a waiter, to dislike his wine or his coffee, or to be reading unpleasant news. While that mask—of which he seemed unaware—was down, no one could look on him and be pleased. It must have come from a half-mad ancestor; the concentrated fury which it expressed was abnormal. He never had turned it on Marian yet; perhaps he never would; but those who are unaccustomed to shooting hardly ever feel comfortable when firearms are about. This, no question, was a deadly instrument.

And, as I have said, he mixed money with all things, high and low. In three months, she was beginning to feel the nausea of gold. She had married Midas. Herself imaginative beyond the nature of women, touching their passion for luxury with an enchanter's wand, which disclosed the ideal in adornments otherwise little better than weapons of the sex and incentives to marriage, this rare person loved the beautiful things she saw, and not simply the means of getting them, nor themselves as merchandise. Her 'folly of riches,' to speak as scientific men do, which had grown out of a starved and unhealthy life, was now passing rapidly away. But Harland, twenty years her senior, and a worldling, though he delighted in houses, lands, pictures, jewels, books; in horses and chariots, in the finest eating and drinking, in society and entertainment, cultivated an ambition of which all this was partly the reward, and yet more the stimulus. He was mad after power. And power, in a democratic age, went to money. That was the secret which Marian fathomed, and it threw her back into a solitude where no kindness of her husband's could enter in.

They began, therefore, to walk the world in company, linked by a golden chain—glittering, but still a chain. When Lucas described pictures to her, and summed up the old romantic history, cruel or tender, fierce and magnificent, which was the life of all they saw in their Italian pilgrimage, he might have been a merchant of fine stones, coldly examining their facets, weighing them in diamond scales, in love with nothing but their value. He was amazingly clever, quick and ingenious, full of a certain easy, but not refined, humour, which, on occasion, hurt her sense of justice more than some outrages would have done. At Santa Margherita, for instance, where they had spent a day or two, she observed one morning, as she sat reading in the balcony, an old man, not too well dressed, with snow-white but abundant hair, and an excessively pale face, making his way into the hotel. He asked for Mr Harland. The

financier came out, greeted the stranger briefly, took him by the arm, and led him into the garden, which Marian overlooked from her balcony. A short conversation ensued. The old man, shaking and low-voiced, was evidently pleading with Mr Harland, who laughed and laughed again; walked about in the liveliest manner; came back from the end of the garden; and, at last, taking out his purse, offered the visitor a couple of coins. At this sight, the old man, bursting into tears and curses—the English ruggedness of which smote upon Marian's ear—hurried as fast as his ancient limbs would allow into the street. What did it all mean?

Harland came upstairs after a while. 'Do you know who that was?' he asked his wife, smiling. 'No, I suppose you don't. That's the old Squire of Heathcote, over from Monte Carlo.'

'The Squire of Heathcote, whose place we have? That wretched old man? But he was begging—I saw you offer him money.'

'Which he wouldn't take, the idiot! Yes, he wanted to borrow, just to put on a colour again! You know, I met him years since at Monte Carlo. I never gamble. He never does anything else. We did some business at that time; and in consequence of our different systems, I am the owner of Heathcote, and he would be jolly glad of a five-pound note. I offered him a couple of twenty-franc pieces, *not* to be returned. What a blue rage he was in.'

Marian could say nothing, and the matter dropped. It was supremely indifferent to her husband what became of De la Beche. He would have been astonished if she had told him her feeling when he spoke of his charity towards the ruined gamester. Harland had seen many a campaign; she was a raw conscript, and this corner of the battlefield suddenly laid bare sickened her.

And she was in her Bluebeard palace again, at Fenimore Place, crowned and married to wealth, which had upon it the taint of blood—doubtless, though

Latimer said otherwise, spilt in legitimate warfare. But the scent of it on her garments was fresh, and no attar of roses, or liquid gold, was powerful to wash it away. Yet the reward of her Iphigenia-sacrifice appeared to be exceeding great. Whenever, driving from Heathcote to the Vicarage, she spent an hour with Mr Greystoke, romped a little with her young sister—whom she thought too easily flushed, and much too excitable for thirteen—or glanced into her old room, where the stamped gilt leather on the walls greeted her as out of a primitive legend, in which, sometime before the Flood, she had taken a part, the air of English comfort wrapped her round, bidding her think of the warm southern breeze that she had blown into these stagnant sails. What a change was there! The old days had come back, ruddy-faced, jovial, their skirts full of good things—the vineries and pineries once more, the spruce appointments, the tended flowers, the plate and the table linen, the service indoors, and the decent carriage, and the money jingling in her father's pocket. It was well and very well. She remembered, nevertheless, a smart saying, that 'An Englishman's idea of heaven is a comfortable middle-class home'; and she wondered whether the heroine, Iphigenia, would have given her soul for plate, clean linen, and a handsome brougham.

And what could the Greekish damsel have made of Emmeline, soured to the point of perpetual maidenhood by the misfortune which had blown her house of cards to every quarter of the compass, while Marian, disdaining one lover, had caught a second, and was now the queen of the countryside? Religion, aided by generous subsidies from Mrs Harland, suggested the only consolation which this bereaved young woman could look to. She was petrifying into a second edition of her mother, with a weakness which, in all valour and secrecy, she did her utmost to overcome, not unlike that of Ariadne in Naxos; for Bacchus may be deemed the official substitute of the flying Theseus. Thus had the unwedded girl and the matron their several

afflictions, which the thousands of Mr Harland alleviated in one way, but were destined to aggravate in another. The philosopher's stone, though it may change baser metals to gold, does not, it would appear from these instances, cure all complaints, as the superstitious have held with Cardan and Paracelsus.

No one could accuse Mr Harland of being niggardly. His settlement on Marian was worthy of a great prince on 'Change; and it even amused him to set up his father-in-law's small but charming establishment in every detail perfect. He made over to Mr Greystoke a handsome number of shares in the Missionary Syndicate—which aimed at the largest possible list of clerical subscribers—and he transmitted the dividends (the first of which, by powers obtained from Parliament, were paid out of capital) with edifying punctuality to Rylsford. But the certificates he kept under lock and key. Still further did his kindness protect the Vicar from that terrible insanity of gambling; for Mr Harland insisted on a three-monthly report, or balance sheet, exhibiting the charges and discharges to which the clergyman was liable, and his cash in hand after all bills duly receipted. 'When we play a fair game,' he said in his cheery way to the Vicar, 'I don't mind settling up whatever I lose, but business is business.' The Vicar sighed and acquiesced. He had long been a vagabond sparrow, hungry but adventurous; now he was put into a gilded cage, and fed out of a box, always certain to be replenished. His appetite fell off, but his meals were sure.

The financier's own appetite was not always in the best condition. He slept indifferently at nights, but had the fine Napoleonic power of lying down at any time and going into a deep slumber, untroubled by dreams. His intense fits of absorption, unlike anything Marian had ever known, impressed her with a sense that, however much he did to make her a happy wife, she stood afar off from his innermost feelings. Did he wear in his heart of hearts the woman he had won? She could not tell. A mighty passion had subdued

Lucas Harland long before he met Miss Greystoke; he did homage to it without ceasing; it filled his brain with its fumes, thrilled down every nerve, took his attention from what was under his eyes; he walked the world a monomaniac, possessed by this one vision of the power of money.

Letitia, who had made him her study during years, said to Marian, 'My brother is always, whether he shows it or not, in a high state of irritability. Take your own way, of course, but don't thwart him. You can smooth him down by keeping an eye on the little things he forgets and putting them in his way—keys, and letters and the like. He mislays them more than you would fancy—goes searching about after them, and has sometimes to give it up with a bad headache. That vexation, petty as it is, irritates him more than losing thousands in the City. I used always to keep his keys. You had better take them now.'

His young wife had not the courage to propose it. She was a poor weak woman, looking down from the wall on a battle in which Harland would more and more be engaged; and how could she bring him help? She consulted Miss Raby. 'Have you patients whom you keep well?' she asked her, 'on the good Chinese plan, "I pay so long as I don't want you." Nervous patients, stubborn and wilful, whom you medicate in spite of themselves?'

The Doctor looked sharply at her and smiled. 'Half our patients have nothing the matter with them but business. I tell you in confidence—over-pressure! The brain tyrannises and ruins the stomach. If men were poor in spirit—didn't want to "make a pile"—where would be most of the insane, the neurotic, the dipsomaniacs? We are burning up the good air, and what shall we breathe?'

'I wish, Lizzie, you could prescribe for Mr Harland. He is just the man for that Chinese arrangement.'

'Nay, nay,' she answered, laughing and shaking her head. 'I don't prescribe for gentlemen, least of all for the like of him.'

'Why not? He would only be an additional patient.'

'He would be my only patient. A man with Mr Harland's responsibilities! Hasn't he got a doctor all to himself? Depend upon it, some tremendous person, with all the letters in the alphabet at the end of his name, feels your husband's pulse every day, before and after business hours. He doesn't put his doctor into any prospectus. But you may swear he has one. I would not take such a case at a thousand a year. But I will look after you, Marian; you want attention.'

She was likely to want it still more. Twice had they been down to Wynflete, on short swallow-flights, a few days at a time, Lord Wootton doing the honours of his Abbey with a grave deference, which no Benedictine spiritual peer among his predecessors could have exceeded; he was politeness itself to Mrs Harland, while Lucas, unfolding ever larger schemes, found him as eager-hearted as a boy to win the new continents with their mines, railways, waterways, markets, where the first that arrived with capital might secure to himself every pre-emption, and all the riches that lay beneath the moon; for Governments do thus, in light and easy fashion, mortgage the centuries, and create the sacred right of private property in public domain. Lucas felt his wings growing to the condor size; they would embrace nations and overshadow them. Imagine his case, then, as on a mild winter evening, a few weeks before Christmas, he proposed another visit to the North, and Marian—they were seated in the great Japanese drawing-room alone—turned to the piano, struck a plaintive chord or two, and answered, without looking round, that she had rather not go to Wynflete any more!

'Not go any more! But it was decided on our leaving Lord Wootton. Any more? What does "any more" mean?' His less amiable voice was speaking, and a glance told Marian that the dreaded purple mask was down.

'I am not strong enough for the journey,' she said, blushing in her own way now, for the words sounded to herself an evasion. And Harland detected an under note which boded something new.

'We can put off our visit if you don't feel equal to it,' said the gentleman. 'But why did you say "any more?"'

She sat and looked uncomfortable. 'I don't like Lord Wootton,'—at last, hesitating.

'Like him? You needn't. But I want you to be civil to our friend. He is worth any Board of Directors in the Kingdom. There's nothing we two can't pull off the market, if we pull together.'

'But, Lucas, you are ever so rich already, aren't you?' She had intended to begin this dialogue earlier, and now was her chance.

'Rich enough. I shall be richer by-and-by, with assistance from men like Wootton.'

'Of course—of course,' said Marian, with a deprecating accent, 'I am only a girl.'

'Quite enough for you to be,' said Harland; 'you manage the business to perfection. What more do you want, *chère petite?*'

'That is just it,' she cried, 'I want no more. I have all I ever dreamt of. *You* want no more, Lucas. Why shouldn't we be satisfied? Your plans—all over the world—can't make you really any richer; they tax your strength—overtax it,' she went on desperately. 'What is the object in slaving at the wheel? It *is* slavery.'

'The Wheel of Fortune, my child,' said her husband, settling down in his chair, 'is a wheel that turns, and won't stop turning. To keep on the top, and not be pitched headforemost, requires some acrobatic skill, which I flatter myself I possess. You little women talk of riches as if they were something absolute, so many tons of the Pyramids of Egypt, set on an everlasting base. But riches are, and always will be, relative to the number of rich men, and how much every one of them has got. If I don't eat, I am eaten. Which would you

have your husband to be, Marian, the boa-constrictor, or his victim? I see you are not acquainted with my life-history; shall I tell it you?'

'Please,' she said in a whisper, fascinated, though not by love.

'It is a long story to me as I look at it from this armchair; but I'll make it a short one. Our family is about as good as yours, I take it—not so old in the College of Arms, but of a respectable antiquity. And poor as rats. We did own a rather fine place—Harland, on the outskirts of Manchester—but it came into my possession with mortgages, and I don't know what all on it—a rope round my neck that some damned lawyer could pull when he liked, and there I was. On paper I flourished as a landowner; in fact, I hadn't a penny.'

'What did you do with Harland?'

'Could do nothing for a long spell. When I opened my oyster and saw my chance, I cleared the encumbrances, let the land on building leases, and sold the house for old materials.'

'Your own home? Where your people had lived for generations?'

'My own home, where my people had lived for generations. It fetched an uncommon price. Manchester gentility was invading our sacred inheritance, and I made gentility pay through its aspiring nostrils. The name, you see, had a value. Harland Park sounded patrician. But I had made my *coup* before then; I was not to be hurried.'

'Go on,' said Marian. She could not speak this language, only try to understand what new duties it laid upon her. She was a nurse in a hospital, and he the patient. He must tell her what ailed him.

'I hadn't much education. At sixteen I left the Grammar School, an orphan, with Letitia on my hands. Every shilling my father had left went to maintain her. I didn't grudge that; a woman ought not to struggle for life. But I had to struggle. In a wooden box, called an office, with the gas burning into my eyes and

turning my hair grey—how many hours at a stretch? Just as many as my firm liked; for I could not leave them except to fall into the gutter. I earned enough to keep a decent coat and pay for a lodging where I shouldn't be elbowing the lowest cads; but there wasn't always enough over to buy a dinner, and I've walked about the streets of Liverpool, and not dared to look into the windows of the cookshops for fear I should faint at the sight of food. So help me God, Marian, that is true.'

'Oh, I do pity you—from my heart I pity you,' said his wife, and her eyes moistened. 'I never knew people could suffer so much, unless they were in rags.'

'In rags? I couldn't afford to be in rags. After the pangs of hunger—mind you, I'm not talking rot—I mean downright gnawing pains "i' my ain inside," as someone says—my worst trouble was with my boots, they always seemed to be made of brown paper, and would come to pieces on a rainy day, and my headgear, which must be respectable, or out I went. Well, I set my teeth, said nothing, and steeled my fancy to the worst that could happen. I used to think, over and over again, "It can only come to lying on a doorstep and starving. I shall feel the knife where there's no bread cutting me through, and then a fever, hot and cold, and then my head will go round a bit; and then—curtain! When I'd come to that, I was a made man. If I could starve, could I manage to save? I did save—out of my miserable earnings. In five years I had twenty pounds. And with a capital of twenty pounds I started in life.'

'Twenty pounds is four hundred shillings; not much to open a business!'

'No, except—' he paused and might have been seeing those ancient times in a magic lantern, 'yes, there is a kind of business where twenty pounds would come in handy. I could—you know, we're talking secrets between man and wife—I could lend to fellows that had nothing at all.'

Marian did not dare to move or speak. She held

her breath. It was beyond the most horrible nightmare that had ever shaken her in feverish dreams. Shylock, Shylock! No, she must try to think of his sufferings, his misery, which drove him to it, putting steel spurs into the tender flesh. His agony would be his justification.

'You are not to suppose it an easy game. It is all hazard and lottery. I lost, I won; I had my ups and downs; I was working with both hands; the debtor is hard on the creditor, as you can fancy. He has got your money, you haven't got his; never will get it, perhaps. The good debts had to pay for the bad. Then I got into partnership with my old man, Jacob Maule, that used to trample on me like a doormat for his boots; and I paid him back; oh, yes, I had the whip hand now. I didn't eat of that enraged cow all those years and give him lamb cutlets and green peas when his turn came to try his teeth in the animal, you bet. My dear, forgive this jargon; we talk it in the City, and somehow the City has got into our drawing-room to-night. You can see I've been down; now that I am up, I shall keep the wheel turning in my favour and at my pace. Hammer or anvil! There's no alternative.'

'And did you never fall in love during all that time?' asked Marian—the inevitable question which, to a feminine philosophy, sums up life.

'Every young fellow falls in love,' answered her husband, sententiously, 'and falls out again. I spare you the chapter of *mes premiers amours*. I had plenty to think of with my speculations and my ambition. For I was ambitious. Look, Marian! to me the world is just a sea of wax, nothing firm, all yielding, pulled this way and that way, shaped into ten thousand forms, melted by mighty fires, the prey of the man that plunges boldly into it, and takes it with hard fingers. As for what you call riches, they are a cloud, a phantom, an idea, a cheat; they never keep the same value for two days together; and if you have them, every man is your enemy, unless you go shares with him. That is the bargain between

Wootton and myself. And now, won't you go down to Wynflete?'

'Do you know why I won't, Lucas?' said the girl, driven to bay. 'No? I will tell you without more ado. Lord Wootton, your friend, our host, dared to make love to your wife under his own roof. That is why.'

She was quivering with indignation. But Harland sat up in his easy-chair, coughed slightly, looked at her a moment, and said in a soothing tone, 'Wootton is incorrigible. I am glad you didn't mention it till now; I should have had to quarrel with him, and it would have been devilish inconvenient.'

'But we sha'n't go there again? I am so delighted.'

Harland made a curious face. 'I didn't say that. We must go. In fact—' hesitating, and taking up his parable more courageously, as Marian did not interrupt him, 'since the old fribble has this ridiculous notion—I rather suspected he would be philandering after you—why, Marian, you could just catch him in his own trap.'

'What!' she exclaimed; and she was on her feet in an instant, 'you—you tell me to act as a decoy? You, Lucas?'

Marian was standing in the middle of that superb drawing-room, erect, and with distended eyes. And an extraordinary thing took place within her. Up to that day and hour she had never *seen*, with the vision of the mind, the absolute difference between right and wrong —no, not even when Latimer thundered at her in the Vicarage garden. Now she saw and was terror-stricken. And she burst into a fit of weeping.

Harland came up to soothe and calm the tempestuous creature, but she put him from her. 'You ought to have married Mrs Henshaw,' she cried, and went swiftly out of the room.

It was their first quarrel, and a bad beginning. When Miss Raby called next day she was alarmed at her friend's appearance, and driving straight down to Mr Harland's office, she sought him out, scolded him with as rough an accent as she could put on, and at last

deigned to inform the guilty husband of reasons why Mrs Harland must not think of travelling to Wynflete or anywhere else. He flung his hat in the air, caught Miss Raby round the neck, and received a smart blow across the eyes in return for this affectionate attention. But he was in such a frantic state of joy that he could have thrown his bonnet over the windmills had there been any in Nicholas Lane. And he made eighteen thousand pounds on the same never-to-be-forgotten day.

In the rush of this torrent all the rocks that stood up threatening their wedded happiness were submerged. Lucas forgave the injury which he had himself inflicted; and Marian, after the shock of their first encounter, was thrown into a state of unrest, curiously blending sentiments as opposed as they were powerful. On her marriage, the habit of day-dreaming, too common at Rylsford, gave way before the perils and pleasures which made their journeyings in Italy seem like a prelude to some formidable drama. She now fell into long musings, vivid as a child's; and in them Lucas, the downtrodden, hungry, forsaken lad, having the name of riches, but a dinnerless pauper, appeared with just the tinge of melancholy and the demand on a woman's compassion, hitherto wanting in his *bourgeoise* romance. She felt how the iron had entered into the young man's soul; she was grieved as though his horrid scars were smarting even in prosperity. And the instinct of motherhood, which in a strong man sees the protector of its offspring, moved her to an affection that by mere change of seasons would be love, unqualified and altogether human.

But the tide of anger surged up as well; the clear sight had come to her of what wrongdoing meant; and the still small voice uttered a condemnation louder than tempest or earthquake. Marian felt happy and miserable by turns; she loved, she despised, she argued in her own mind with Lucas. How could he treat his wife as an item in his stock-in-trade, a feature in his prospectus, a means of opening Lord Wootton's purse? What manner of man was it that let out on hire the charm

that should have been sacred to himself? And to foresee it—to reckon upon it? 'I suspected he would come philandering after you.' She could not help going to the glass and considering where the red mark was that his burning sentence ought to have left on her brow. Almost would she have chosen to be thrust out of house with a single garment on rather than have gone through those days at Wynflete, knowing now it was her husband who had put her up to exhibition. Her husband? and not, as Lord Wootton said sneeringly, her *impresario?*

Feelings so complex and exacting did not make for health. Miss Raby was concerned, came often to Fenimore Place, prescribed quiet, cheerfulness, and other impossible medicaments. Lucas, on the doctor's suggestion, spent his evenings mostly abroad; in his presence, Miss Raby knew, something of a challenge lurked. She told him so.

'Your wife is going through a critical period for mind as well as body,' she observed. 'Let it run its course. Go out, amuse yourself, leave her to Miss Harland, who has the gift of setting people at their ease when she is fond of them. Your turn will come.'

He was very submissive, and went and amused himself after the fashion of prosperous financiers; talked money till three in the morning, and plotted against his shareholders while they were sleeping in their cots.

And on a fine evening in May, as Marian sat in her room with a tray of delicate food on the table, her self a little feverish, excited and depressed from hour to hour, Lucas came in, and looking down at her—not without concern, told her he must call at Mrs Latimer's, but would not stay long. Meanwhile, would she sign some transfers which he wanted to take into the City on the morrow? 'Your maid will witness the signature,' said he—'and the transfers, where did I leave them? Oh, in my desk downstairs in the library. Yes, I left the transfers there, but, confound it, where did I put my keys? I am always mislaying them.

Marian, you will have to take them in charge, as Letitia used to do.'

'I have begun already,' said his wife. 'Aren't these what you are looking for? I picked them up on the stairs;' and she pointed to a small bunch of keys lying on the mantelpiece.

'Yes, that's the ticket. Very well, I know the papers are in that particular desk. Have them signed by the time I come back from La Scala. Good-bye, my love.' He kissed her hand with an air of old-world courtesy, and went softly downstairs.

The library, a large and sombre room, was on the ground floor, looking into the garden. What appeared to be a bookcase in one of the corners had a little mechanism attached whereby it was convertible into a postern door; and of this only Mr and Mrs Harland had the key. When Marian had tasted the dish in front of her and found it dry as sawdust—when her glass of champagne was like a fire on her lips, and she had put it down almost untouched—she dragged herself wearily along, wishing there were no transfers to sign that evening, and moved slowly on her errand. The electric lamps, burning with their silent golden ray, lit up the room; and there, on a large writing-table near the window, she saw Harland's desk. It took her some few minutes to find the right key in the bunch. Now she had thrown back the lid, and stooping, could perceive no transfers. She felt very weak; she must sit down. Accordingly, she pulled a chair to her, fell into it with a sigh, and began her search again. 'These papers are in sad confusion,' she murmured. There were heaps of them thrown carelessly together—bills, receipts, cards of invitation, letters. Yes, letters; but they did not concern Marian; she was on the track of those horrid documents which must be signed. Truly, but what were *these?*

Her hand, straying about, had turned up to the surface a whole flight of tiny billets—scented, fragrant, their pretty seals broken—seals in crimson wax, stamped with a winged figure. They were so light and flimsy,

they flew over the weightier things in a swarm, like a troop of butterflies; and there they lay, scattered and fluttering, as her breath coming violently touched their gilded edges. Notes, notelets, pigmy scraps of fine tissue paper, and written on in all manner of inks—purple, rose, orange. How many of these butterflies were there? Might she count, take them up, read them? 'Oh, my transfers!' she exclaimed, 'why did I not see you first?'

They were such pretty notes, clean for the most part, as if not long in existence; some creased or soiled with carrying them in a pocket; one or other had a man's scribbling on the back—Harland wrote in that impatient scratch when he was hurried. Who, then, could be his correspondent? Mrs Latimer? No, it was not Pauline's finely-traced, small handwriting. This was larger, not—not well-educated, somewhat of a scrawl. 'And,' said Marian, taking up desperately the billet which lay nearest, and seemed to mock her with an insistent gaze, 'neither is it English, but French! Pauline would not write in French to Lucas.' She had forgotten the transfers; her whole soul was in these fluttering things that seemed alive, with a sting in them which might pierce her any moment.

In French, all of them—and so fresh their colour and scent—and they bore no dates. Only *Jeudi*, or *Samedi*—mere days of the week; or else the hour, and that uncertain whether of the day or night. Postmarks? They had never been sent by post, or the envelopes were destroyed. What to make of them? What did Harland mean when he sent her to this desk? Ah, what?—

Read—of course she must read. At once, without delay. There was a riddle here to be answered, on which her life hung—and another life—dearer still. Oh, she must know it all before he came home. Not Pauline, certainly not Mrs Henshaw. Who then?—

The little, tiny, caressing traitors lay in her hand. They would babble their secret out loud. What did they say? French—yes, of a sort, fervid, ungram-

matical; a passionate speech, without stops, headlong, moody, full of sudden turns; and it worshipped Harland as a god—*m'amour*, and *m'amour*, a thousand times over. Could Marian have put them into that dancing white procession in which they had flown to the heart of the adored, she might piece them out and learn the story; but they flew round her in a crowd, and she heard their accents all at once, maddening her by their very sweetness. For these birds sang exceeding sweet. Nay, not birds either; butterflies, according to the fancy that came with their sudden appearance. The winged creature in the crimson wax was a butterfly; and when they were signed, it was always the same—'La Farfalla,' 'La tua Farfalla,'—an Italian girl—yellow, slight, vivacious, and one that had a voice. Clearly, for all this the notes announced, or alluded to, or played upon. La Farfalla! Harland's butterfly-love! With whom, nevertheless, it did not seem to be always summer time. Tears, poutings, quarrels of a moment, 'Kiss and make up,' 'forgive my bad boy, *mon ange, mon idole*'—the golden rainy weather in which love puts on the colours of the rose and breathes out intensest fragrance! Though Marian was reading with a pang at her heart, she felt that in the capricious Farfalla simple passion struck one dominant—there was a genuine soul in the letters. But where did they begin? Had they come to an end? Perhaps, with time, a man of genius, construing them painfully, might have set them in their true order, unravelled the skein now tangled beyond extrication. And, for Marian, time did not exist. The hour was flying. She read these fatal, innocent effusions of a nature unknown to her, yet not without kinship, backwards and forwards, in snatches that brought a sense of tears, hating them if they were of the present, yet constrained, even so, to perceive in their disjointed utterances a great and deep love, such as she never could have felt towards Lucas Harland. Was love the test, the condition of marriage? Then this Farfalla was Harland's wife, and not Marian. He must think her a snow image, compared with his yellow maid.

The butterflies, turned to scorpions in the air, buzzed about her and their stings drew blood. Was it conceivable?—but certainly that quarrel about Wynflete made all bad things seem likely—and Harland was vindictive, not to be charmed from his purposes. A man who could marry as he had done was capable of unmarrying too, and that with violence. Did he want to get rid of Marian and bring in his Farfalla? 'When love goes out at the window, the woman had better go out at the door.' Another of his sayings that was branded on her bosom! But could the basest of men have selected a time like this? No, impossible. Her head swam; she saw the world turning fast as a wheel which came round and round, striking her with its cruel spokes. There was no strength left in her, but only an intense and growing excitement. . . .

A step sounded on the stairs, went up to her room, came down after a while, was at the library door. Harland entered.

'Well, Marian, have you found your transfers?' he cried gaily. A slight sparkle of the wine was in his eye and voice.

'Yes, I have found my transfers,' she answered, neither stirring nor looking up. 'Come and tell me if I am right.'

He bent over the desk, saw her lap filled with the butterfly-notes, took a handful of them, and with a great laugh that went through her, exclaimed, 'By Jove! did I leave those in my desk? What a forgetful devil I am!'

'You left them. I have read them. Tell me what follows?' she said in the same monotonous accent.

'Follows? Nothing follows. There ought to be a fire in the room. Let me take these up to yours and burn them.' He began to gather up the pretty notes like so much tinder, crumpling them as he spoke.

'Where is—La Farfalla—now?' asked his wife, observing him.

Lucas smiled. 'I give you my honour I don't know. These are old love letters. *Où sont les neiges d'antan?*'

'What was she? You can tell me that, I suppose.'

'Will make a clean breast of it any time you like, Marian,' sitting carelessly on the edge of the table and tearing up the notes into long strips, as if to make spills of them. 'La Farfalla was—mind, I say *was*, past tense, ever so past—she was an accomplished actress, a delicious little creature, and one that adored me. Not the only one;' with an assumed fatuity, which he put on while remarking how pale Marian had become. Inwardly, the man was cursing the untowardness of his short memory at that particular date. Was ever anything so mistimed?

'I see she adored you. I think she must have been a good woman. Why didn't you marry her?'

He was silent for a while and then exploded. 'An actress, my child, I said, an Italian actress! Marry an actress off the operatic stage? No, thank you; the Harlands had not fallen quite to that point. Besides, Heaven knows—I daresay she had a husband already—a dozen husbands.'

'But you ought to have married her,' repeated his wife, doggedly.

'Well, Marian, you should be the last to say that, for then I couldn't have had the privilege of calling you my wife. Unless I followed Mrs Henshaw's example! La Farfalla, poor creature, would have given me cause, no doubt.'

'Did she give you cause? What made you abandon her?'

'No hard words please. I'm not sure she didn't abandon me. But so the world goes. These things, if they were to last, would be too much of a *corvée*. One gets tired, or sensible, or travels; I should be hard put to it if I had to give you the closing chapter. And what would be the good? *Finis;* that tells you everything.'

'Still, you don't know whether she is dead or alive?'

'Not, I give you my hand upon it. Very probably dead. All this happened, as the story books say, ten years ago. Her voice had got rather *passée*, and a new

style of acting was in vogue—the modern, more intimate, less dramatic, you know. She was slightly old-fashioned. I haven't seen her name on a bill for ages. Now I am going to burn these dead leaves. Come with me and see me do it. I am awfully sorry you came across them. My memory is a sieve.'

He took up the wastepaper basket from under the desk, pitched all the letters into it, and was making for the door. But Marian sat where he found her on entering. 'Won't you come?' he said, pausing on the threshold.

'Not yet awhile,' she replied absently.

'You had better, my dear; take as much rest as you can; forget all about La Farfalla. Show you have as bad a memory as mine. Come, Marian.'

'By-and-by,' she answered.

Mr Harland was not used to opposition. The purple mask descended over his face, and he went out, carrying the basket like a footman. 'What obstinate fools women are,' he muttered, as he went upstairs.

But Marian sat immovable, thinking her own thoughts. Until an hour ago she had been a mere girl, though expecting soon to be a mother. One hour's reading and ten minutes' conversation had made her a woman. Oh, the burden and the shame of it all!

CHAPTER XIII

MATER SAEVA CUPIDINUM

How long did the unhappy Marian sit brooding over this vision of sin which had risen suddenly upon the air, blotting out her empty imaginations—childish now, impossible and absurd, of an existence in which pleasure ran riot, and no one was the worse for self-indulgence? It might have been hours; time stood still with her. But again the door opened and Lucas came in. He was wrapped up as about to leave the house.

'Now, my dear child,' said he, caressingly, 'those *billets doux* have made a cheerful blaze up your chimney. My fingers are black with the smoke thereof. Go to bed like a sensible woman and get a good night's rest. I shall be seeing some of my Directors at the Megatherium; probably not home again till two o'clock. Our man Thorndike is just returned from Zanzibar with news of the Central African Mission. If he has got the pious and eloquent Ravenbrook to join, it will be the making of our Syndicate.'

A curious cross-current of ideas set going by this missionary talk invaded Marian's fancy. Still motionless, but with glittering eyes fixed on Harland, she said, 'Were not you and Letitia bred up Evangelicals?'

'A Pharisee of the Pharisees I, my dear—straitest sect imaginable. Why do you ask?'

'Did you think you were saved—as a young man?'

What was she driving at? 'Saved? Yes, I knew, at sixteen, that I was saved. And I am sure of it now. The gifts of God are without repentance, as Paul tells us. Always was a religious man in my way, though I

can't go to church on Sundays—must have one day's rest in the week.'

'Were you saved when you—took up with La Farfalla? And when you dropped her?'

He looked in amaze as at the sound of a language he had never heard. 'Eh—La Farfalla? What difference did that make? A Christian is not saved by his works. "Free grace and dying love"; isn't that the good news? I see, Marian, you are in a sadly benighted condition. Well, ta-ta, mind you get a good sleep.'

He was gone, and the atmosphere did not weigh so heavy. But to sleep! To rest! Ah, no, she must spend the night far otherwise. Calling her maid, she sent the girl to her own quarters; then locked the door of her sleeping apartment, put the key in her pocket, and came down into the library cloaked and ready for the expedition she had in mind. That door also she locked from the inside, turned off the electric light, and passed out by the secret way into the garden.

That was a way which the cautelous and double-minded Lucas had often gone in his bachelor days; for it would enable him to escape unobserved into the high road leading towards Kensington Gardens, and thence, as the Germans say, *in die weite Welt*—to Paphos, or anywhere he chose. Never had the foreboding come to him that one mild May night would witness the journey of his exquisite and unsullied Marian over these paths, half delirious, yet with a strong mistaken sense of self-control, and of energy which was but the prelusive symptom of a fever hastened on by all she had in a moment experienced. Without guidance or deliberation, the girl—she was not twenty-two yet, we must remember—had found herself, as we all do at the turning-points in our destiny, alone, in a perfect mental solitude—the only real and palpitating heart in a world of shadows. But she would look close at these shadows, speak to them, ask what they were doing, endeavour to make their acquaintance; for as they moved to and fro, she was drawn along with them, a mere captive; and hitherto how blind?

A soft intermittent breeze, and clouded lights overhead, as the moon comes and goes, faint now in the depths of some tarnished looking-glass, then suddenly brilliant and full, or swept clean out of the sky, as great banks of rainstorm come rolling up, and with them an impenetrable curtain, dark-blue purple, thrice folded, under which the rows of street lamps emerge into a serried illumination. Marian, once outside the house, feels a wild sense of liberty, of something desperate to be done; it is like an elopement. She cannot walk far; a hansom rattling along stops at the cloaked lady's signal; she gets in, gives the man his orders, and sits, with her gloved hands clasping the door, upright, with eyes intent, as the cab rattles on, passes under the shade of the tall trees, meets other vehicles, and by-and-by falls into a walking pace, slow as a Lord Mayor's procession.

The Park is left behind; lights come frequent, glaring reddish-tinted—above, all round—throwing their sad reflections high up against the clouds; and everywhere, as at the High 'Change of London, throngs are passing, entangled, confused, with an incessant noise of movements and of voices. The hansom is making slow progress down the Marlborough Parade. Many of its shops, closing at the hour when business ends and pleasure begins, exhibit their multifarious wares behind unshuttered windows, a light burning far within, or mere darkness sleeping on the shelves and counters—curious ghostly realm of objects no longer solid, but, as it were, things of the mind, *noumena*, in the dialect of philosophers, which have stripped off their attributes and do but exist—until to-morrow, bustling round with its vulgar sunshine, shall turn them once more to purchaseable phenomena. Marian keeps the feeling of this somnolent universe of *bric-à-brac* deep in her spirit, while not minding it at all; a background, vast and spectral, on which the flame-pictures come out, and the characters that hurry through them, singing, laughing, shouting, noisy in every possible and impossible key—a Bedlam let loose. It is going on towards

midnight; and these packed and discordant streets' would say, if the moon bore no witness against them, that it was high noon—in Hell.

Yes, there was no other word to describe the vision adequately, of which Marian had long glimpses, all the way down Marlborough Parade, across the wide open mouth of St Andrew's Street, at King George's Quadrant, over and afar in the grim distances of Shrewsbury Avenue, and in the Corn Market, where merchandise of a human sort, exceedingly strange to behold, was selling at that hour. If, as the poet sings, 'Hell is the shadow from a soul on fire,' this was Hell—the burning souls threw out a dreadful imagery of themselves on all sides; and Marian, who had begun to read her Dante in Florence, called up, with a shudder, the well-known lines:—

> 'Noi andavam con li dieci demoni;
> (Ahi, fiera compagnia!) ma nella chiesa
> Co' santi; ed in taverna co' ghiottoni;
> Pure alla pegola era la mia intesa,
> Per veder della Bolgia ogni contegno,
> E della gente, ch'entro v'era incesa.' *

This fiery pitch, soft-clinging to the garments, hands, faces, hair, of the many who had leaped into it, became, in their never-satiated eyes, hard as enamel; such eyes the country girl brought up in her Vicarage garden, the well-sheltered lady in her drawing-room, had never seen; or, if anywhere, on Mrs Latimer's golden staircase, and then subdued by courtesy to a less insolent glare. But, in this circle of the pit, there was little or no concealment; the nation, all aflame, as Dante knew them, recognised one another, and sported joyously up and down, a people past counting. No market-place

* 'With the ten demons on our way we went;
Ah! fearful company! but in the church
With saints; with gluttons at the tavern's mess—
Still earnest on the pitch I gazed, to mark
All things whate'er the chasm contained, and those
Who burned within.'—*Carey Inf.*, Canto xxi.

was ever so densely thronged. Of all ages, conditions, manners; the democracy of a ruling passion that levels, and flings together, and packs into the space of Pandemonium spirits immortal, but here most brutish. A pitch not to be handled; yet down into it were plunging men whose features, or the like of such, Marian thought she had seen in better company; bright and gay-looking youngsters; and seniors most venerable in their appearance; and eager City men, trafficking now in flesh and blood directly, without the intermediate lie of a prospectus; and a rabble of ill-dressed youths, stretching across the pavement in a gang, until broken up by the police;—and streaming all through, in every direction, running up against one another, linking arms or falling into sets as for a dance, crying aloud with hoarse voices, keeping up a shrill monotonous recitative, her sisters, the butterflies that come out by night, and dash into the blaze, and die with a cancer at their hearts;—La Farfalla, multiplied to a thousand, flashing and flying, humming and singing, a swarm of doomed insects, with wings that would shrivel as soon as the fire touched them. This had she come out to see. But it was so much more terrible than her fancy that she turned from it in speechless loathing, and for a while was quite overcome.

But as the Florentine, piercing ever towards the centre, could not ascend by the way he came, but must press through dark and dismal until he had passed the uttermost deep, in like manner Marian, though her heart throbbed in agony, would see what there was to be seen. She left the shelter of the hansom, and had herself put down in front of the Imperial Theatre, Cornmarket. She did not know till too late the risk she was running. Once caught up into the throng, she could not get free again, but went with them, helpless, all the more tormented that faces peered beneath her veil, both of men and women, equally hideous or menacing. Luckily she was not the only cloaked figure on the pavement; others pushed by in a sort of masquerade, searching or searched for;

but, in spite of the rain-clouds, almost every well-dressed woman she saw was in evening costume, with bare neck and arms; not a few went bareheaded also; and the flowers they wore in their hair glowed with the crimson or smoky yellow light which fell from above—a sky below the sky one would call it.

What age were these lost women? Impossible to tell, so burnt, wrinkled, blotched, painted, haggard were their faces, and so fatigued the prevailing expression. Many, when she could see them near at hand, looked as if they had not long come out of hospital; the boldness they put on had a singularly made-up air, and behind it was hysteria in some of its innumerable forms. Not one had she yet encountered who was quite sober. They flocked in and out of taverns, eating-rooms, restaurants; the tables were crowded, waiters running, voices calling; an atmosphere of the *cuisine* added to Marian's unpleasant sensations—a kind of mist overspread the windows by which she struggled on, and from half-open doors fumed out an intolerable smell of spirits. To her unspoilt sense it was suffocating; how many steps had these people come down the ladder since their very flesh partook of the taint? To this element all were subdued; they reeked of it, and took no notice; it was a universal leprosy. And it stamped the girls' faces a withered, unwholesome look, red, and at the same time chalky, which the paint they wore in several coats had no power of disguising. All the colours in the vision of sin as thus beheld were amazingly crude—brick-dust, or livid and leaden, or black tinged with green, or an oily orange; and the false hair, the dyed grey wisps that hung about the ears, the violent red ringlets affected after a fashion not understood—if one could paint all this, why, one would be repeating the words of a Latin comedian, who took his description from Menander, or some other Greek, over two thousand years ago! We read them as if the world had changed enormously since Terence wrote. Has it changed at all?

Many were young, almost children. By-and-by, in another great world-city, Marian was to see actual children, girls not yet fifteen, plying this unspeakable trade at the doors of drinking saloons, while the police looked on. In her London travels she did not meet any that seemed so youthful as this—but young enough, and sometimes pretty enough, and not always bold; and in their eyes the fire had not, as yet, hardened to enamel. As she urged her slow way up St Andrew's Street, into which the wave had now driven her, she marked a girl struggling as on the stage, half jocosely, with several young men—medical students, perhaps, or budding lawyers from the Inner Temple—and the lights over a club-house door showed her features as distinctly as in a cameo. Tall, slight, deadly fair, a beautiful consumptive, in some poor large-coloured muslin, she was laughing with them, quite at her ease, but would stop to cough all of a sudden, and on her handkerchief, as she took it from her lips, there was a streak of blood.

'Come,' she said in a broken voice, and with a Celtic accent, 'you will all give me drinks, and I'll go home. 'Tis Friday night, and I'm going home, in honour of God and His Blessed Mother.'

'Not you, Kitty,' said the chorus around her.

Kitty's eyes flashed. 'I dare one of you to follow me,' cried the girl. 'Aren't ye gentlemen?'

In a moment the space around was bare. Marian went up to her. 'How old are you, Kitty?' she said in her taking voice.

There was a pause of astonishment, and Kitty answered, 'I'm seventeen, ma'am, and I wish I was seventy, and in my grave. But, please God, I won't live long, the Doctor says.'

'What do you do for your living?' asked Marian, walking beside her.

'Ah, don't bother me!' said the child, impatiently. 'What do you do yourself, then, to be here this time o' night. 'Tis at home you should be, my good woman. What do I do, is it? I earn three and sixpence a week

sewing men's jackets, and I pay four shillings rent to my landlady. And give me a shilling now, and God bless you.'

Marian had brought her purse, as it chanced. She took out half a sovereign, and said, while she slipped it into Kitty's hand, 'I have a friend—a lady, who is a doctor. If you tell me where you live, she will come and give you something for your cough.'

The other looked suspiciously at this cloaked figure. 'You wouldn't want me to be giving up my religion?' said Kitty.

Marian smiled. 'No, surely. Keep it as long as you can.'

Kitty gave her address, her fingers closed on the half-sovereign, and she pushed her way into the nearest public-house.

Marian watched her with a sad heart. This was another doomed butterfly, not so much bent on scorching its pallid rosy wings, as taken up by the pinched fingers of necessity and thrust into the flame where it was hottest. The lads that had gathered round Kitty were marching about on the quest of new adventures, humming their music-hall tags and topical vulgarities. They had already forgotten the pretty consumptive girl; there were so many. What was a single fair-faced Kitty among all these? But while Mrs Harland was turning over in her mind the saddest reflections, and moving forward as speedily as the crowd would let her, a couple of men walking arm-in-arm a little way in front caught her attention. She heard their voices, and knew one of them. It was her husband's.

The affairs they were discussing cannot have been very private, for they talked freely and without regard to passers-by. Both were sober, a contrast to the general flush of semi-intoxication that made the scene fantastic in an uncommon degree, as if troops of Bacchanals let loose upon the pavements had swept from them every vestige of the serious daytime. Marian pushed her way along, as though quickened to exertion

by the sight of Lucas, but when she had reached the embrasure of a deep entrance, his friend, stepping back on some occasion into a tobacconist's which they had passed, let the financier saunter slowly on. There was a clear space of some yards just here, but if he had put his hand out, he would almost have touched Marian. The next moment her heart stood still.

A young woman, quite unlike poor Kitty, dark and rather sullen in feature, very showily dressed, was speaking to Harland. He put her aside with a laugh, answering her in French.

'My dear child, that's all nonsense. You only want money.'

The girl took him up angrily in the same language. 'Don't be so brutal, monsieur,' and her teeth shone with the sudden snarl of a dog which leaves the ivory visible.

'I am not brutal,' said Harland, philosophically, 'it is the truth. Here is half-a-crown,' pulling one out as he spoke. The other looked at it in her hand, looked at him, and let it fall in the gutter.

'I want a friend,' said she, caressingly; 'perhaps you could be one. Come and see me to-morrow.'

'Nay, nay,' was the answer, 'I could do you no good, and you, probably, would do me no good. Why don't you go back to your own country? You had a mother; is she alive?'

The girl shrugged her shoulders. 'Possible. Who knows?'

'Well, then, go to her and leave this trade.'

She burst out laughing. 'My mother brought me up to it,' she almost screamed. 'What would you? It was her own. Come, I see you are rich; give me a sovereign, *mon philosophe.*'

He gave her one in silence. As she turned hastily with the money in her grasp, she almost ran into the arms of a tall, very youthful-looking lad who was coming down the opposite way. They exchanged glances. '*Adieu, m'amour,*' said the French girl, kissing the tips of her fingers to Harland, '*tout le monde n'est pas*

philosophe,' and the darkness, pierced with points of light in a neighbouring street, swallowed up her and her companion.

The financier looked after them. 'Virtue is its own reward,' he murmured, 'and sometimes it costs a man twenty-two and sixpence. *Allons*.' His friend had come up by now; Lucas began to tell him the story, and they went their way, Marian not daring to follow them, but better pleased with her husband than she had felt since their quarrel. He was not utterly bad. Did he wince at that reminiscence of other days, '*Adieu, m'amour*,' which went through her like a knife? She could not say so. Of what were men made, then? And were they such strange beasts, all of them, as this perplexing husband of hers?

The night's adventures were not at an end. Still advancing, but in a kind of circle which was bringing her round to Marlborough Parade, at every step she met the form of this 'fierce Mother of Loves,' who ruled with all the power and contagion of madness. Above that world floated an enormous vampire on outstretched wings, blasting where it overshadowed. This was the night of humankind; and this the goddess of their night, before whose coming the sun fled away. A she-devil, gorged with the misery of children; from whose lips fell down a purple rain, dyeing the garments of her slaves. Marian had lately been seeing a picture, the work of one who was a poet, and possessed the art of thinking as well as painting—'*Laus Veneris*, the 'Lauds of Venus.' But here was the truth, and no picture; not a dainty chamber-vision, but the boundless tapestry of hearts pierced to the quick, steeped in their own red venom, and made the footcloth of a triumphant Vittoria Accorambona, magnified to colossal proportions.

So her fancy worked, as in hours when the fountains of the great deep are broken up. She thought in figures which were the truth so powerfully acting on her, as to stamp itself visibly into the imagination and there take

a form she could see—or rather, could not help seeing. And while she went along, dreaming, present to every shameful instance as it came, absent, as though a great way off, regarding all this, a withered hand clutched her by the dress, and a thin, scared voice sounded close to her. 'My lady, I'm perishing. Give a poor old soul something to keep her warm.'

She looked aside at the speaker; in the half gloom there crouched a heap of rags—a woman, whose eyes glimmered like dying embers in a brown dust. The apparition struggled to its feet, but would not let go its hold upon Marian. 'What do you want?' said the latter, knowing well before she had uttered the superfluous sentence.

'I've got nothing at home; I'm starving with hunger, and I'm too old to make a living like these girls,' said the voice. 'Don't scorn me. I was well brought up. You wouldn't believe it, but I'm a clergyman's daughter. Drink and a bad husband have brought me down to this.' There was a dry sobbing in the air, dreadful to listen to.

'Why don't you go into the workhouse?' said Marian, pitying her, and in the undertone which betrays us when we are not sure of our meaning.

'Die rather,' said the voice out of the gloom. 'No workhouse for me.'

'What will you do, if I give you anything?' asked the other, doubtfully.

A frank utterance, between laughter and hysterical tears, answered her. 'You ask, and I'll tell you. I want food badly, but I want a glass of gin worst of all. You can't say I'm telling you lies. You give me some coppers, and I'll get the gin.'

No, the truth was more awful than any lie. But it seemed to have its rights, and Mrs Harland, for the second time taking out her purse, had given the fallen creature a couple of shillings, when the steady tramp of a policeman made itself heard not many yards away. He came up near the two women, scanned them at his leisure, and took especial note of Marian's rich though

quiet dress. After which he walked over to where they were standing, and laid a heavy hand on her shoulder. She shook him off indignantly, but he grasped her again.

'Come, my lady,' said the man in a gruff accent. 'What are you doin' 'ere? I've seen you before; I know you. It's time you was run in. You come along wi' me.'

'Good God,' whispered Marian, feeling deadly sick, 'you never saw me till this moment. Take that, and let me go.' She flung him her purse, which fell heavy into his open palm; but he held her still, and pulled her towards the light of a street lamp hard by.

'You wait, madam,' he repeated sullenly, while the withered crone made off as fast as she was able. 'And don't you scream, or you'll 'ave a night in the lock-up.' Under the lamp they stood, Marian shaking all over, and the policeman searched into the purse, emptied it, and put the contents in gold and silver into his pocket. During this process of blackmailing, Mrs Harland kept her eyes fixed on his coat-collar, on which shone out brilliantly the letter of the division to which he belonged and the man's number. She never forgot them; many a night afterwards they filled her dreams, and seemed to be written all over the sky in white fire. She did not know what next he would do. What was happening to her? The policeman's figure moved away into a blazing cloud; she was enduring pangs so terrible that their novelty amazed her even in the midst of the pain;—was it possible that anyone had suffered like this since the beginning of the world?

But the guardian of midnight morality, having looted her purse, made her take it again. 'I don't want that precious article,' he said, with a grim smile on his thick lips, 'now you go 'ome, if you've got a 'ome, and tell 'em I let you down easy. Good-night, mum.'

His steps were heard again, firm and regular, as if in the very sound of them asserting the moral order, to whose good keeping he had been sworn in.

Time passed, and his victim remained where he had left her, the empty purse in her hand, the pavement rocking, a dense cloud settling on her brain. After this agonised and uncertain interval, she came a little to herself, muttering with icy lips, 'Home—he said I must go home—if I had a home.' But the idea of home was now something remote; Fenimore Place might have been in another planet, and Lucas Harland a name in some book she had read. How unreal were all things except this indescribable pain! Well, she would rouse herself, call a cab, and go back to the library where the letters were; she did not remember the burning of them. And then her hand, squeezing the purse flat, told her it was empty. She thought that she screamed aloud. But her scream was only a stifled groan.

Empty! and she must be at home soon—soon. Her one thought now was home. She walked fast a little way; she tried even to run; she helped herself along by the railings of the houses; by the time she had reached where the Park succeeded to them, it was with the utmost effort she kept from fainting. Then she would encourage herself by reckoning each space between the lamp-posts, and taking it as hurriedly as her strength would let her. But long before she had reached the Wellington statue, head and nerves and muscles were all done. She leaned heavily against the railings, and anyone passing by would have taken her for a drunken woman. The rain had begun, but she did not feel it.

There was someone passing by—a clerk, decently dressed, a young fellow of about three-and-twenty, who had been spending the night with friends, missed his train at Victoria, and was wasting the time until morning, when he would take the first—for, being of a peculiarly shy temper, he had not dared to go back and ask for hospitality where he had been amusing himself. Marian's pitiable condition struck him. He went up to see what was the case. She looked at him drearily.

'I have no money,' she said at last; 'and I am too weak to go home in this way.'

He asked where she lived.

'Take me near Fenimore Place; I can manage then,' she said, steadying herself by the Park railings. 'Have you the money for a cab?'

'It will be all right,' he answered hoarsely, not touching her, and excessively embarrassed. 'Hallo, there's a cab.' But it was gone past, and they had to wait several minutes. 'You're sure you haven't taken too much?' said the clerk, in his perplexity.

Marian could not answer—she was in a flame of agony. At last an empty cab stopped at the young man's signal, and they got in.

The drive was not long, although to both of them it appeared endless. When they reached the point which Marian had indicated, the young man, alighting, helped her out. During the drive he had considered her furtively as she lay back, her eyes closed, in a corner of the cab, and, little acquainted as he was with great people, something warned him that he must be deferential.

'I will see you home,' he said, keeping his hat off, 'in case you would allow me.'

She thanked him, and said no; she was quite near, quite safe. And he paid the cabman, and, like the born gentleman he was, walked quickly out of sight, lest she should think he was prying upon her movements.

Marian dragged herself on the remaining distance, and reached the door by which, hours ago on this dismal night, she had left her home. It was locked, but she had the key. And she let herself into the library, opened that door also, and crept upstairs to her own room. As she went by her husband's door she could hear his deep breathing. And in the grate, where the fire was nearly burnt out, she observed a pile of white ashes. They were all that was left of La Farfalla—her love, her jealousy, her suffering, had come to this. But Marian, casting aside hat and cloak, fell on her bed, dressed as she was. For a long while afterwards she knew nothing of what happened. . . .

'I think we must send for Dr Oldmayne,' said Miss Raby to Lucas. 'He has the highest reputation, as you know; is said never to have lost a case. He would be willing to meet me in consultation. I don't wish you to imagine, Mr Harland, if anything should happen to your wife or the child, it was all because you had a woman doctor instead of a man.'

'I sha'n't imagine that,' said Harland, politely.

But he was thinking of Marian, not of Miss Raby, while he spoke. Above all, he was thinking of himself. Would the Power that governed things give him an heir to all he had amassed, or puff!—blow down the house of cards, and leave him childless? There was a menacing appearance, for which he could not account, in the circumstances of the last few months. Harland, as is the case with many acute business men, trusted not a little in his luck, which certain young Hebrews, with whom he had dealings, called 'Mazzal'—and, as they said, they were willing to bet on it. Was the 'Mazzal' going to forsake him? Why had he overlooked those letters, given Marian the keys? He must have been infatuated.

There was no way of propitiating the dubious thing in the dark, or he would assuredly have done it. The only medicine-man he could send for was Dr Oldmayne. He had not been suffered inside his wife's room since the delirium came on. All he could do was to tramp uneasily about the house, now in the great drawing-room, now on the stairs, and again in his sister's boudoir, talking to himself in broken sentences, and agonised by the shrill tones of suffering which once and again pierced through doors and curtains. Letitia was not well; he knew that his agitation tormented her, although she would not shut her door upon him. And so he raged up and down, a haggard sight, murmuring under his breath lest anyone should overhear him, but the words came irrepressibly, 'Oh! Farfalla, Farfalla, is this your revenge? Will you kill my son, you venomous insect? Kill, after these years? And I thought you dead and buried!' Such was the

litany over which he went again and again—the feeling, or superstition, which made him repeat his words, was no better than madness, prone to imagine some secret of deprecation in violent speech, as we read in Herodotus of the Scythians who shot their arrows into the sky when it thundered, hoping to intimidate the storm gods. And Harland would have liked to kill the phantom of the actress, which held possession now within his walls and would not budge. It was ubiquitous—here with him, there with Marian, the incarnate plague.

The famous medicine-man came towards nightfall with an assistant. Dr Oldmayne was past sixty, tall, upright, grey-headed, pale-faced, with steady eyes behind his gold-rimmed spectacles, a hand as white as the hand of Moses when he drew it forth from his bosom in Pharaoh's court, and a cold, silent manner outside the sick-room. To his patients he was quite another man—perfectly gentle, and as absolute as the genius, of which he had no small share, could make him. A strong materialist, he held what are called advanced views; but, unlike many of his school, he was disposed to think that women had better cleave to the superstitions in which they were brought up. Miss Raby did not lose in his opinion, although a Christian; he had examined her for her London diploma, and kept a favouring eye upon her ever since. There was probably no other woman-physician he would have agreed to meet. When she told him what measures she had taken, he approved and went so far as to praise them; they were not, all things considered, injudicious. He did not say, what they both felt, that the best thing she had done was to send for him.

The night, Harland thought in his solitude, was lasting an eternity. No message came from the sick-room; and he could but try to occupy his mind with business calculations, which simply went round and round, as in a windmill, but the result was always a blank. Miss Harland fell asleep; the house would have been profoundly still but for those low moanings

that, near at hand, must have torn the man's heart. Towards three in the morning Dr Oldmayne came down to the library, where Harland was turning as in a cage. One of La Farfalla's notes, unburnt, wedged between the lid and the desk out of which they had been taken, showed a white line as he moved up to it. He was pulling it out when the physician accosted him.

'A somewhat difficult case, my dear sir,' said the latter slowly, looking across the room and not at Lucas; 'the patient has had a shock, it appears.'

'Mrs Harland is rather sensitive,' answered the financier, 'a very little thing might upset her, in that condition.' What was there to tell? Absolutely nothing.

'Quite. But the consequences are serious. You must be prepared—'

'Is Marian dead?' interrupted Lucas quickly. 'Don't beat about the bush, please. I can—I can bear anything but that.' The doctor put up his hand soothingly.

'Mrs Harland is living, and will come through, I trust. But we cannot—be patient, my dear sir—we can hardly expect to save the mother and the child.'

'Save the mother!' said Lucas in a whisper; almost without knowing what words had passed his lips. He kept tearing up La Farfalla's note into tiny shreds and biting them hard. Was this the Mazzal?

'Thank you; that is what I was anxious to know,' said Dr Oldmayne. He went noiselessly upstairs, and left the husband, who had now given up his dream of being a father, stricken to the ground. 'You have killed my son—you—Farfalla!' he gasped again and yet again. He never should have a son; always the spectre of that forsaken woman would come back and slay the child; she was inexorable. She would never leave him henceforth, but be always there, inside his threshold.

Another lapse of time, and Miss Raby entered the library. 'Marian is sleeping now, and the worst is over,'

she said in her calm tones. He did not dare to ask, 'Is the child living?' but, after a pause, she continued, 'There was no hope of success; Dr Oldmayne, if any one, would have saved the boy.'

'It was a boy?' murmured Harland, in a choking voice. 'Yes,' she replied; and that was all.

'But now I recommend you to go down to Heathcote, or somewhere,' she continued, 'if only for a few hours. Marian seems to dislike your being in the house just now. It is a fancy we must humour. May I tell her when she wakes that you have gone?'

He nodded, being in too great a rage and passion for speech. It was still the haunting ghost, the house-demon, that drove him out. He must obey.

And the first words Marian uttered, on coming to herself, were, 'I have lost son and husband. La Farfalla has taken them from me.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE FELICITIES OF COUNTERPOINT

'No, nothing should ever induce me to like the country, it is too *triste*, too green. I quite agree with the lady and the serpent in persuading the 'grand old gardener' to lose his paradise. All three must have had too much of cabbage roses and their own society. Don't expect me to stay over a week, even at Wynflete, if we go down there,' said Mrs Latimer, as she did her best to vie with the aboriginal snake, in coiling and uncoiling, tangling her many-coloured opalescent silks to disentangle them again, while she twisted round in her chair, and fixed her cold blue eyes upon the latest guest in the Japanese tea-house at La Scala. 'For, you must allow, Mr Henle,' she went on, pulling at her golden bracelet with its tender forget-me-nots, 'the country is not a suitable *mise-en-scène* for any play—not though they were the sweetest idylls, how much less when they happen to be so quite uncommon as Mr Elven's? London is the only theatre, after all. Come, come, you mustn't shake your head in that positive way. There's no arguing with science and technique, you assure me. But there is; I am going to argue with them, and in their cause. Bring Mr Elven to London; managers will jump at the chance; and you will have England, America, the world, looking on. You don't agree? Impossible man! Marian, can't you bring up a battalion to help my shattered forces? Do *you* want a week's seclusion at Lord Wootton's? Oh, that stupid little red-faced town, and that muddy sea! How I long for the crush at the corner of Hamilton Place when I drive out over those interminable roads and meet

nobody, positively not a soul, but the butcher's boy going round with his legs of mutton. Now, Marian; speak up for culture and London.'

'I should prefer Mr Henle's speaking,' said Marian; 'all I know of Mr Elven's music are a few songs; and he doesn't set any great value upon his songs, I understand,' with an enquiring glance at the stout, cheery-faced, golden-whiskered Bavarian who was smiling with much good-humour, while these ignorant ladies chattered about the dramatic art. Conrad Henle was positive enough, as Mrs Latimer said, and therefore not impatient; he knew on what errand he had come to this jewelled house, with its Vivian whom he meant to persuade; he could think his thoughts while the shallow stream flowed on. When, however, Mrs Harland spoke he recognised a grain of common-sense in her question, and answered her direct, his light blue eyes beaming.

'His songs were trifles written to keep the fire from going out, my dear lady; they cannot come into our discussion at all. We are talking of the lyrical drama, which is one great piece from end to end—a combination of all the modes of expression, music, dancing, action, speech, in a medium suited to them—that is to say, on a properly-devised stage. Ah, do not interrupt,' to Mrs Latimer, whose lips were moving inaudibly. 'But something else is wanted, the sounding-board, the living atmosphere, which will multiply and give back the vibration, making all share in a common sentiment—we must have an audience. No audience, no play. I, Conrad Henle, am able to set up a fit stage. I have done it at Rosenberg, and made many improvements since. I understand the lights, the scenery, the dresses, furniture, all that the eyes can take in. How shall we come by the right audience? That is the question.'

'Call it out of the streets of London, where there is every kind of audience,' cried Mrs Latimer; 'compel them to come in.'

'And who would come in? Everyone that could buy or steal a ticket; everyone that wanted to be in

the fashion; well-dressed Philistines, with Frau Goliath and her big daughters; journalists and diplomatists and opera-goers. And that is all the reform Gerard Elven would make in London! He would sacrifice his art, and he would not save them from their Philistinism. *Du lieber Gott!* How true it is, 'Art long, life short! And you women — excuse me — you are our worst enemies.'

'Teach me better. I will go down on my knees and be your disciple,' said Pauline, clasping her hands, with a look of angelic humility. Conrad observed her and said nothing for the moment.

'What is your quarrel with the opera?' Marian asked him. 'Isn't the opera music, dancing, action, speech, combined on the stage? I used to fancy Mr Elven a later Mozart or Rossini, only more complicated.'

Conrad lifted his hands. 'Mozart *or* Rossini! You will say next Goethe *and* Schiller, will you not? These pairs, mortal and immortal, yoked to the same car! But so it is. Now there is but one Mozart—one, and never will there be a second. Rossini—thousands have there been of Rossinis, as many as the nightingales on Italian bushes, banal as twelve o'clock noon.' 'Are nightingales so despicable?' threw in Marian. He answered, 'When they sing in the daytime and in crowds, where is the poetry? But Gerard Elven! Gerard Elven has done what Mozart would have done, had he, the perfect musician, met a poet who was worthy of him; he has fulfilled the dream which haunted Beethoven, with his unrivalled musical resources and his creative imagination; he has lifted the Opera from where it lay screaming and sprawling, set it up on its feet, given it a new heart and soul, put wings to its motion, and breathed into it a divine breath. What is the difference between his drama and the old Opera? It is this—attend to what I say, if you please. The Opera was an artificial thing made like a box in compartments—no serious meaning—a pretext for unmusical people to meet and make love. The new drama is

Shakespeare, with an accompaniment of all the tones that should fully express his characters while they act and speak. It is the only possible stage for poetry—mind you, poetry, which is the highest interpretation of life—as it ought to be given, not read on a printed page, but made plastic, visible, an atmosphere all round it, in a world of its own.'

'How admirably you lecture!' said Mrs Latimer in her coaxing voice. 'I never *could* read Shakespeare; and when I see him acted I ask for passion. Robbie was fond of Shakespeare; he liked the Juliets. I always thought them too old.'

'And is not passion the quality in which Elven is supreme?' exclaimed Conrad. 'Passion—what passion? But if you will do your best to have "*Istar*" given at Lord Wootton's, I promise you passion and to spare. Some of the critics tell us the new drama is *only* passion—feeling in a state of musical frenzy, they say; and all his plays are love-lyrics. You will not want for passion, let me assure you.'

'After all, it is the men who will decide and not we poor inartistic women,' answered Pauline. 'Now Charlie does not know one note from another; but Lord Wootton is music mad, although I should suppose it was the Italian opera—and the opera singers, perhaps—that took his fancy. You will have to rely, at last, on Mr Harland. And that means you, Marian.'

'Does it mean me?' said Marian dreamily, looking round at the beautiful fantastic-seeming place in which they were sitting. The late September afternoon filled it with a calm, still radiance that made her silent. She could have listened, uttering no syllable, while Conrad went on, in his pleasantly foreign accent, telling of art as the poetry which interpreted life, and music as its everflowing accompaniment; but she felt, and had long been feeling, that with passion, love lyrics, and the flushed heaven of Romeo and Juliet, she had little concern. The meaning of life? Could anyone reveal it to her how thankful she would be! It was not, surely, love. Not for her at all events. And she knew herself

to be one of a multitude which no man could number. In the new music there might lie hidden some of the healing balm that would staunch her wounds—inwardly bleeding now, and, if they were even lightly touched, smarting afresh.

'Mr Harland spoke to me long ago—it was at Wynflete—of the hope he then had of seeing Mr Elven there. I did not hear what Lord Wootton thought of the scheme. For myself, I should be delighted. Your explanation,' she said with great simplicity to Conrad, 'seems to make it easier to get a play than an audience. Are we fit ourselves to be among them?'

'We must risk something,' he replied with German gravity, which set them laughing. 'My point is that in the country—at a private theatre—far away from London, the risk would not be so terrible. Rosenberg was just the place; fifteen miles from the Bahnhof; no accommodation except at the Castle. But that is gone from us now since we lost the Princess. Still, Wynflete Abbey, with Mr Harland—Elven knows him of old—to see to the arrangements, would be a good place for a trial. We must all be there together first, of course.'

Mr Browne Vandyke was announced.

'We are talking of counterpoint and footlights,' said Pauline to her master in esthetics. 'Have you met Mr Henle in your travels after the Beautiful, Mr Vandyke?'

'Seen, not met,' answered the critic, bowing and flinging himself negligently into a chair—then glancing round—'how meditative the afternoon seems in a London September! Why do people go abroad when they might be tasting this landscape? So calm, so sweet, so still! And the faded horror of the London houses, with such an air brooding over them, what a strange artificial sense it all has! Ah, we were at Stuttgart—you and I, sir'—to Conrad, attentive but silent—'in the great battle of "*Amis and Amyle*"—that perfect tale of friendship; and I remember thinking that even I could have added little in the way of suggestion to the setting. You are in England for long?'

'It depends on these excellent ladies,' said Conrad. 'Mr Elven wants "*The Descent of Istar*" to be given as he composed it, nothing added, nothing taken away. It was never put on the stage but once, in the Castle of Rosenberg. Do you think Mr Harland our man? We are proposing it to him and Lord Wootton.'

'Lord Wootton is the slave of melody, tune, aria, cadence—he will not appreciate Elven. I was slow myself to see into the abysmal deeps of the dramatic music until the day at Stuttgart which conquered me—horse, foot, and artillery. As for Harland—an astounding faculty of combination—but he is commercial before all things. I beg your pardon, Mrs Harland—at least I should beg it, only that money—money rules, and Zeus is now kicked out, as the Greek poet says.'

'Is Mr Elven commercial too?' enquired Marian of the still smiling Teuton. His lips broadened to a laugh, and he shook his head vigorously.

'You never saw such a child in money matters. Poor, always poor, except for a passing shower of magnificence, which does not last, when we are all drenched in gold. He earns, he spends, he is careless, he will not save, and he says that taking interest is damnable.' The strong word echoed, rebounded, filled the Japanese tea-house with its thunder. Pauline shut her ears against it, Marian was startled.

'All very fine,' observed Mr Vandyke solemnly, 'and so a great composer ought to feel. But I should like to ask Mr Elven whether art has ever flourished without luxury. And luxury means a world of superfluous wealth; and what does that mean but interest, unearned increment, exploiting the workman, for the profit of those who do not work, but do something infinitely better—play to the select few that know and appreciate what is beautiful?'

'Well, Gerard believes in public luxury and private simplicity. And he will not invest his winnings. Not that he has had much to invest. You talk of exploiting, Herr Professor,' said Henle, while Vandyke started as if some one had struck him across the face—he a pro-

fessor, an official in a chair! Heavens, what next? 'I am a critic, not an owl,' he murmured; but Conrad went on without heeding him. 'Let me tell you, Gerard has been exploited—up hill and down dale, as you English say—by every manager that first bought the right of acting his plays, and then cut them to pieces for his villainous operatic performances. Elven will not allow that he ever has been acted, except when we had the management ourselves. What a purgatory it was, even so, at Stuttgart too, and "*Amis and Amyle*" is one of the simplest dramas! They distort, and maim, and caricature, and then fling him a handful of thalers to be scrambled for among his own company, as they tell him. What exploiting can be more horrible! Private luxury, speculation—ah, believe me—it is the death of noble art.'

Enter Charlie Latimer, as from a journey, looking tired, and there is a cloud on his handsome face. Pauline offers him tea, which he declines. 'Must have a brandy and soda,' says the sulky Prince, ringing. His wife goes over to him, and looks at him, smiling gravely. 'Another speculation for your friend, Mr Harland,' she says in the lightest of accents; 'will you give us your advice? A musical syndicate.'

Charlie sits up, all attention, swallows his pernicious draught, looks across at Marian, who does not seem to be watching him, and flushes violently. Mrs Latimer has remarked this token of mental disturbance on other occasions; but is it her policy or her pride that forbids her to comment upon it? Perhaps Charlie is not aware that he blushes like a girl whenever he sees Mrs Harland. 'I wish you would contrive to look stronger, Marian,' he says in a husky tone.

'I am quite strong now, thank you, Charlie,' she replies; she is always gentle with her formidable cousin. 'But are you right, Pauline, in calling this idea a speculation?'

'No, no, it is no speculation,' cries Henle, standing up in his excitement. 'We have no views of profit at all.'

'Then you won't get Harland to join,' says Latimer curtly.

'But, sir, we think we shall,' returns the German, coming up to him and standing in front of his chair. 'Mr Harland has fine taste, and an enthusiasm for music; we know it; he has shown a beautiful decernment in speaking of this very play, which he saw at Rosenberg acted. All we ask is to produce it somewhere in England, out of London, before the right people. Then if they will take up some more of Elven's programme, well—if not, a true masterpiece has been given once as it demanded to be given. It is an edition of our drama we would have—not a musical syndicate.'

'Harland has turned religion into a limited company,' said Latimer, with a short laugh. 'He will put your art on the Stock Exchange at a premium.'

'And a very good thing too,' threw in Mr Vandyke. 'It takes an enormous amount of money to produce a really splendid drama. Get it out of the pockets of the Philistines. Spoil the Egyptians, and then dance upon them with timbrel and castanets, like Miriam. That is the only tribute they can pay to what they never will comprehend.'

'Harland is your man in that case,' said Charlie. 'However you begin with him, it is sure to end in a quotation on 'Change.'

'What I admire in Lucas,' observed Mrs Latimer, looking down sweetly at her bracelet, 'is the golden touch; it is so light and easy; nothing rude, vulgar, ponderous; but a little fingering here and there, and wherever you turn, a vision of dividends. You are always right, Charlie dear; persuade your cousin-in-law'—with a tender glance towards Marian, whose expression baffled her, it was so collected—'persuade him to show us what a syndicate is capable of doing for the Fine Arts. It will not be such a trouble as getting twelve per cent. out of the Acts of the Apostles in Swaziland.'

Conrad felt a growing melancholy—a deep, Teutonic, Teutobergian sadness—when he heard these words.

'But *you* understand us, dear lady,' he whispered to Marian, 'not commerce at all; no company, limited or illimitable. You will explain to Mr Harland.'

I will do my best,' she answered with hesitation. 'But Mr Elven, if he comes to England, must be on his guard. The golden touch! It leaves nothing alive. Let him see to it that he is not enchanted by Midas.'

'In that case, you will disenchant him, my dear,' said Pauline, embracing her.

'We will make another company out of this for Harland,' was Latimer's observation, when they were sitting alone. 'And we will take good care Elven is not a favourite with the British public. You can lose a devil of a sight of money in the Opera.'

Would Mrs Harland grieve over such losses occurring to her husband? Pauline did not feel that she knew as yet how this married couple lived their life. Marian had none of that expansiveness which comes with content. She was too reserved to be quite happy. And then, she had lost the son and heir that was to be.

Much too reserved, indeed. There was now weighing upon Marian's conscience a memory that she never could efface, neither exorcise by speaking of it to any soul alive. When she had come out of her fiery trial, and the disjointed phantoms which haunted her illness were passed away, up from the depths rose, with its events in their fixed place and most vivid colours, the night she had travelled as in a kingdom lying between this world and the next— a twilight for which there was no name. She remembered the dark journey, the women to whom she had spoken, the fair Kitty—was Kitty still on this side of the grave?—and the policeman rifling her purse. Not a dream, as she would fain have believed, but the one towering reality, high as a mountain, that stood up between past and present, dividing her happy childhood—so she held it now to have been—from the days in which she must go forward, a mourning mother.

What had she done with her child? He was dead,

a lovely blossom blasted in the birth; and could she think herself blameless? In vain she pleaded her trouble, the delirium which those letters had awakened —others might make allowance; she, in her heart, made none; she seemed unable to conquer the mighty instinct that no pleadings could satisfy. In their confidential talk, Miss Raby had once mentioned a case that fell under medical observation—she did not say it was her own—of a daughter, passionately attached to an invalid mother, tending on her day and night, who had been charged to measure out her sleeping-draught, opium or whatever it chanced to be, and had given it, rightly as she thought, but the dear mother never woke again. And to the daughter it seemed as if she were a murderess; the tremendous shadow—cast, perhaps, from a delusion—lay across her life ever after. Marian dwelt too much on this deplorable incident. 'I am like that daughter,' she kept repeating. At every turn she saw her dead child lying in front of her; she must walk over its little body, while with beseeching unconscious eyes it looked up, a terror and a tenderness unspeakable. Of this fear and remorse, secret as the grave into which her babe had gone down, she dared say nothing to Miss Raby. Better far had she opened her heart; the obscure sense of guilt was changing her character insensibly, and driving her to expedients by way of distraction, which those looking on would interpret some day to her disadvantage.

She felt, above all, that between herself and Lucas the situation was strangely altered. She owed him reparation, and stood in need of his indulgence. Her sin was greater than his; it loomed so large, in the shade of it all his youthful transgressions and follies lay hidden. Not as though she could forgive them whenever they came up in her remembrance; but that was so seldom; and now he appeared in her eyes as the husband to whom she had done an unpardonable wrong. He made no complaint; his manner was perfect. After such a ruin of hopes and prospects he did what was possible for his wife's health; took her abroad again

with Miss Raby as her companion; left—or perhaps only seemed to leave—his multitudinous affairs, while she was recovering her tone and her spirits in the Engadine—and was blissfully unaware of the trouble that she dreaded most his guessing. But here she was protected by the image of La Farfalla, no less constantly present to Lucas, when he thought of the fatal night, than her child's eyes were visible to Marian.

He could not blame a girl brought up as she had been—in a glass case, he said to himself angrily—if on learning what men were, what they always would be, she had gone into hysterics. The mistake, on his part, was marrying a downright *ingénue*, a pattern middle-class English girl, trained by a Puritan mother. But Harland was the last man to ask that these things should be altered. He did not affect a rigorous creed for men, or for women like Mrs Henshaw; but his own wife ought to be a Puritan, and she was so—with these consequences. 'The fortune of war,' he said in his musings; 'one can't have everything.' He tried to forget the hours during which he execrated La Farfalla as a malignant Banshee, not to be bought off the premises with blood-offerings. Her name was written in scarlet on a page that neither Lucas nor Marian had any desire to read; their misfortune reconciled them to one another, making the bond which united them a strong chain from which the gilding had been rubbed away, while the iron was all too perceptible. Harland had his grievance; Marian her sense of guilt. The pretty or pretended affection of the honeymoon was faded like the bride's wreath of orange flowers; and in her morbid fancy that sprig of hawthorn, which once she had held to her heart, was burning into her, its bloom a white poison dropping incessantly, and marking where it dropped by a spurt of pain.

Well, then, what she owed she would not keep back; all she had to give was still too little. Her judgment lay in trance; let Harland do as he liked, he was

master now. Only a certain unconquerable something —it was the woman's deepest nature—protested against the battle of speculation in which he had entangled himself. Marian sighed for a life that should be free from commercial taint, neither coveting money nor in want of it; she had begun to learn that other goods transcend this universal means, which in itself has no value; and, since religion was no more than a dead language to her, she felt blindly about, as one might grope after food in the dark, hungry to desperation, and not knowing where to look.

The miracle which all believed in whom she came across—at any rate they talked as if it had made an impression upon them—was called in every book she read, and every conversation to which she listened, by a great name—'genius.' Only let a man or woman be a genius, and it was taken for granted that they had within them this ineffable thing—this light and power and magic whereby life was transformed. She had never yet seen anyone approaching to the desirable splendour; but once, in a tiresome concert, a famous cantatrice sang, and her amazing brilliancy did stir the heart of Marian, troubled as she was, enlarging it for some brief ecstatic moments. If they could have lasted, perhaps the secret of life would have made itself known. They went as they came; the awful night settled down once more unbroken. But now, what if Gerard Elven's dramas, so highly vaunted, should renew the wonder? Was it possible? A tremulous dawn lay far off on the horizon, faint as water seen beneath grey clouds which make one with it; and yet the water is not the cloud. Even so indistinct was that hope. Would it ever kindle into brightness?

'You were at Rosenberg once, Mr Henle says,' observed Marian to the financier that evening, as they sat in her room, after the conversation at Vivian Lodge. 'Did you know the eccentric Princess, Elven's great friend and patroness?'

'How should I not know her? I was her English man of affairs. Eccentric, you call the Princess Helen? Mad rather, I should say—but in sections, as the wind blew from north or south; she was a rare example of that complaint which artists, musicians, journalists, Jews and Jewesses, and—well, yes—the kings of the money market, are liable to.'

'What complaint? covetousness?'

'Oh, dear no,' he answered, smiling at her harmless gibe. 'That is not a complaint; it is second nature, if not nature itself. No, the doctors call it *la névrose*, for want of a better name—but anyhow, the Princess fell a victim to it. She died of over-excitement. I told her she would; but she only laughed and sang, wildly, as her manner was. Oh, we were on the best of terms; she would let me say anything. I kept some part of her money out of the fire.'

'These private theatricals — they cost a fortune, didn't they?'

'Always do, on such a scale. And Elven requires the most tremendous mounting; besides, there were no end of people to entertain. I doubt, if my advice had been requested, that I should have encouraged the experiment.'

'But you greatly admired "*The Descent of Istar*," Mr Henle says—you spoke of it "with the most beautiful discrimination," according to him.'

'Perhaps I did,' said Lucas complacently. 'I know myself in music and acting, as the French have it. I know, too, whether I am feeding the company or they are feeding me. Musical drama is all very well—sublime, original, the one great art of the century. But will it pay?'

'Mr Elven doesn't want it to pay him.'

'No, but I should want it to pay me, if I took Elven up as a speculation.'

Always the same touch of the plague! It was dreadful in Marian's ears. Must everything that was worthy be ground by this machine to powder? 'Surely, once in a way, "*Istar*" might be given without expect-

ing a bonus on it,' she cried impetuously. 'With your love of fine achievements in art—your real enthusiasm, which I have seen a hundred times—you would be willing to forego the chance of a little more money.'

Lucas observed his wife, not without a certain degree of amusement. How very young she was, in spite of her stately air and thoughtful forehead!

'I like your innocence, my love,' said he, after a while, 'and I can appreciate Elven. You two would make a match—a pair of doves without guile. Do you suppose I shall close with his offer on a musical leit-motiv? Catch me at it! I see a large opening in the market, and Elven is the biggest drum I can rattle upon. I have organised missionary-work on a sound commerial basis; that appeals to one section of our confiding investors. Why shouldn't I organise amusement for a still larger section? The objection is that Elven offers too good an article. Adulteration is the life of trade. He insists on the perfection of his dramas, and thinks it an inducement. But in an imperfect world better suit your customers. They don't know what to make of the real thing, they're so used to the sham. And yet, the Opera is killed. They must have something instead.'

He fell into a vein of musing so concentrated as to lose all sense of his wife's presence. She was thinking also; not perhaps along the same lines. After an interval of silence he looked up and laughed. 'The fun of the thing,' he said, as if he had come upon a clue at last, 'is that Gerard, in his pre-Adamite innocence, trying to get away from a wicked world, and execrating the dollar, has just hit upon the secret of drawing houses *ad infinitum*. We are to lift the audience on a level with the artist, to pick and choose, at the doors, and so give everyone we let in a certificate, a *cachet*, of distinction. Why, if we don't go too far into the wilderness, we shall have the whole middle-class fighting for tickets; it will be a new Legion of Honour. Wootton will see that, I am pretty sure. Wynflete is the proof before letter; we can print off

any amount afterwards. Yes,' he concluded reflectively, 'I think there's money in it.'

And that was Mr Harland's last word. He had not asked Marian whether she was willing, despite certain incidents of which she had spoken indignantly, to go down to the Abbey again. He took for granted that she was. A strong character, she could take care of herself in the presence of the enemy; there was not the least likelihood of her falling in love with Lord Wootton, while that made-up ex-beau, as Harland said pleasantly in his meditations, would have to pay in hard cash for his prowlings round an innocent sheepcote. 'A man is never hurt if he doesn't let on,' was an axiom in the financier's note-book. Quarrel with his old comrade in arms, about loves and doves, and Valentine's Day at seventy! Not he; it would have stood him in hundreds of thousands; the other way was a more excellent one —make Wootton undertake the whole risk of this dramatic enterprise, and if it turned out well, seize the booty before it was divided. Harland himself, mindful of Exeter Hall and the serious gatherings on which he must keep an eye, would direct operations from behind —the less he was known to be mixed up with worldly and profane amusements, the more plausible would his homilies sound by-and-by in another place. As a young man, to be sure, he had indulged in theatre-going; that was ascertained, but the wild oats had yielded their harvest in a quiet season, and the world was none the wiser. In the business of Gerard Elven he would not appear at all; Lord Wootton should act, correspond, issue the invitations, and be the generous champion of an art which even to appreciate denoted the finest modern culture and was given to few.

He remarked, but did not seem to be aware, that his wife had never entered the library—which had once been a favourite room of hers—since the episode of La Farfalla's letters. It was a forbidden chamber which Marian passed by with hasty step and downcast looks. To Harland this extraordinary tenderness of association was an enigma. He never felt so. '*La névrose*

again,' was his only observation. 'Women have no common sense. Where should I be if I ran away from every ghost that comes about me in a white sheet?' He remembered one or two as he spoke, and drove his thoughts instantly down another lane out of their way.

They would meet no ghosts at Wynflete Abbey. In a clear-eyed, radiant October, when the leaves showed everywhere that Midas-touch hateful to Marian, and the northern woods glittered from afar, like the yellowing choirs of some enchanted place, a ruin only half-fallen down, they betook themselves to the long journey, and after many hours swept over the drawbridge that united both sides of the little town on the bay, and yielded them a sight as of some old Flemish picture, leaning-houses, bluish-grey waters, sands crimson under the evening sun, fisher boats moving or still, but always mysterious with their burden of the sea, and weather-beaten like the crews that manned them—a kind at once very human and distinct from the everyday crowd.

Apart, in its own high and gracious solitude, the Abbey rose up—its mighty remnant of a church displayed against the sky, every one of its ribs visible, an engraving with some strong light bringing out its lines, but from the side, so that it kept part of its blackness; and between the bold traceries of a window in the east shone glittering arrows, sent back from a ridge of clouds hanging over the waves—diamonds and amethysts of pure sunset, framed in stone, a jewelled glory which was like a crown set on the brows of the dead. Always driving towards it as they went up the toilsome slope, which long stone stairs, as many as a hundred and forty in one place, made accessible to the town-dwellers, Marian figured to herself that blazing crown with the dead face under it; and the immense nave, grass-grown, desolate, untouched by those gleaming shafts, was the bier on which lay stretched the corpse of old Religion, a mummy that no man regarded. The Abbot's house, clad in soft evening costume of shifting

lustre, with its many-tinted flower beds, gorgeous even now, though lacking the scents and savours of an earlier day, invited them with open doors and windows; and the pleasant sound of the sea broke on them, refreshing as the prelude to some great music, which here, indeed, it was likely to lead up to. But Lord Wootton, stopping the carriage, said to Harland, while holding Marian's fingers, which she could not refuse, a moment too long, 'Elven has wired from town that he can't be with us to-night. Says we may expect him to-morrow. We may! He is very skittish. You ought to have fetched him in your train; he has played these tricks before.'

It could not signify to Mrs Harland on what day the composer arrived—nay, suppose he never came at all—what then? Yet, in that moment of Lord Wootton's speaking, the light went out of the prospect; she was utterly disappointed. '*La névrose* again,' her husband would have told her; and surely nothing but extreme sensibility could have filled her eyes with tears just then. But, if these unknown people, Elven and Conrad Henle, who was to be with him, did not give a fresh rhythm to the stale music of Wynflete, how should she endure it? They must come; they were bound in her imagination by a compact which had been made when she promised Henle to take his view, and help to beat down the vulgarity of a syndicate.

The evening and the morning passed, a long day, sad-coloured, irritating with its empty slowness. Marian loitered on the beach, read some of Elven's '*Istar*' in a bad English translation that made most detestable commonplace of the *libretto* — she knew that the dramatist went into a fury if anyone called his verses, said to be nervous and true poetry in German, by that silly name—and let the book fall on the sand, where its pages soaked in a briny mixture. Elven would turn out like the whole world she had purchased with her wedding-ring; large promise, small performance. And it would always be the same.

Between five and six on that second evening Mrs Harland, still depressed, found herself in the drawing-

room where some of the people were chatting round their host, and a general animation contrasted with her mood, deepening it as always. She could not bear it. There was a smaller room opening out of this, with curtains half-drawn between, and in it a piano, which sometimes she had played on. She would go now and comfort herself a little, if so it might be, chasing away that evil spirit from the Lord which had come upon her, with some spritely thing, not encouraging it with melancholy music. And she sat down and took a piece of the latest fashion from the folios at her side—a song, the like of which is turned out by the hundred every season, obvious words, melody which will not wear, and the accompaniment to order—music-hall order, dashing and effective.

This, then, she played, throwing herself into it as she might in muddy water look to drown the image of a tear-stained countenance, not with any feeling that answered to it, since the piece was so shallow, but with fire of execution, with spirit rather than sympathy, as a virtuoso exhibits readiness, resource, character, in things that would beggar a common man's faculties. And as her fingers danced and pirouetted, so did her liquid notes accompany them, too fine and costly for such entertainment; in this extravagant fashion a young fellow, more than half drunk, driving to bed from his club at a morning hour, shall toss to the cabman sovereigns for shillings. It was a bold performance, reckless, of the drawing-room, in which conversation had broken off and all ears were listening, startled if not amazed. But the one proud voice held on, high above their admiration or contempt, a brief spell of intoxication such as melancholy falls a prey to in its weakest moments, and Marian had ended suddenly as she began, without glancing at the figure which some slight motion told her was at hand, mute and attentive. You could have counted a bar of rest, during which the air tingled still with her audacious notes. Then she heard a silver-clear voice saying, half to her, half in soliloquy,—

'That is rare! But oh, what vile trash to spend one's breath upon!'

'That is rare, too!' she answered with a flush of delight, keeping her eyes on the score. 'How seldom one is paid in the honest coin of compliments! But do you hate love songs?'

Now she could turn her head a little, and see who it was that had spoken. She knew very well. Ah, his portraits flattered him; and, again, they left out the essential. Here was an expression she had never marked in a single one of them. The man—mere, outward show—might soon be despatched, set down in the catalogue, inventoried, point by point, but that auctioneer's account of him was not he. In a second she had framed to herself a picture of her own. As thus, the cheapener of his portraits would say: Gerard Elven, something less than the middle height, looking even small by the side of Lucas Harland, but strongly-built, broad-shouldered, well-knit, active in his movements—the head of the type with which Napoleon has made us familiar, not over large; features very definite, especially the lower portion of the face, which might have been copied from some of the Emperor's medallions; a bold chin, flexible mouth, nose slightly aquiline, eyes dark-brown, expressive, full, and often brilliant, with prominent brows, and a placid forehead under masses of dark hair. The beard was reddish-black and abundant. All this set off, as Providence would have it, by a sober, well-made cycling dress, which Mr Browne Vandyke might have chosen. But the air of habitual alertness and intense tranquillity, what auctioneer could transfer that to his catalogue?

'Do you hate love songs?' repeated Marian.

His smile could be of many sorts, she found afterwards; now it seemed to say that he took her question as an indirect apology, which, in fact, it was, for the perpetration of that false music.

'I—oh, no,' said the clear voice, 'my brother over there might, perhaps.'

She followed the direction of his eyes, and saw

between the curtains, near Lord Wootton, a figure which resembled Gerard, but in a white woollen habit falling to the feet.

'That is a monk, is it not?' said Marian, 'and your brother?'

'An Olivetan monk, and my brother. He is Rudolph, my poet, my versemaker. We were a sort of Siamese twins until, God knows for what reason, he put on that medieval skirt. It is becoming enough; but I have lost my poet.'

'Then did he compose the story of "*Istar*"?'

'He and I together. It is a mixed business. No one could pull the strands out now, and say which was which. The thing grew by a law of its own. Not like that song of yours, which some journeyman hammered out of old horse shoes.'

'I have sung one or two of your songs,' remarked Marian, pensively, not thinking so much of the man at her side as of an evening long ago in the great *salon* at Fenimore Place, and how Lucas made her acquaintance while she recited '*Les Feuilles d'Automne*.' Such an autumn as this present, was it? All the green and golden lights came about her, the Watteau fairy tale, at this remembrance.

'But Mr Henle forbids me to think much of your songs,' she went on, rousing herself. 'I fancied them pretty. What is your opinion?'

The musician bit his lip with a mischievous tooth.

'I will tell you when I have heard you sing one of them. You have execution; it remains to be seen whether acquaintance with this sort of thing has modified your—taste, we will call it. I know I am speaking to Mrs Harland,' with grave politeness.

She bowed, and their talk came to a standstill.

'When I knew your songs best,' said Marian, as they passed through the curtains, 'I was not Mrs Harland. Marriage and music don't go together, in this country, at least.'

'Nor always in other countries,' said Gerard. 'May I introduce my brother? Father Rudolph, come and

be made known to Mrs Harland, whose husband is going to do great things for us.'

The white-robed monk came up at his brother's call, bowed, and looked with keen grey eyes at Marian, waiting for her to speak. Rudolph had *en beau*—if one may use an untranslatable French expression—all that in Gerard was but strongly marked, or even a little inclined to be ugly. His short hair, clipped in the manner of a crown, was coal-black, his forehead a pale marble, and the fair skin was even more transparent, touched with a rose from which all intense colour had been washed out, perhaps by tears. For he had, with a settled look of calm, something in his general bearing that denoted a passage at one time in his life through the fire. Had he appeared less healthy, you would have said an air of convalescence. In that modern room, with its groups of fashionable, though not exaggerated, costumes, he was by far the most striking figure. As he stood waiting, with one hand thrust into his broad white girdle, he might have been taken for a messenger from the Middle Age, sent by Frà Angelico down out of a shining Paradise, where such heads with a halo round them had been canonised, but on his way some human trouble had filled his eyes and given them a shade in their clearness. How like Gerard he was! And unlike, too, as the quiet evening is like and unlike the morning, though both have their crimson banners in the sky, their golden waves of rain-cloud, their songs of birds.

'And are you living in England?' asked the lady, whose admiration had delayed her speech.

'My home is where I am sent,' answered Rudolph; 'at present I live among the Welsh mountains, at Monte Vergine, not far from one of your seaside towns. I cannot manage the name; it is all consonants, like Bohemian.'

'You were at Rosenberg, too, when Mr Harland was there?'

'Yes,' he answered, and said no more. The pale tinge on his cheek was no longer quite so pale.

Gerard put in his word. 'I have brought Rudolph as an auxiliary; he has some old-standing claim on Lord Wootton, which we mean to discount in our favour. Discount,' he added, turning to Marian with a smile, 'is the jargon of stockbroking. How it infects everyone now! You speak it, too, I suppose. There was a smack of it in your song.'

'Be merciful,' she said, with downcast eyes; 'I speak it as little as I can help, but I was given to understand that you are not in love with it.'

'I am, in every sense of the word, a *révolté*, a rebel, an anarchist. Rudolph and I have always agreed in one point—we don't believe in money. Now he has taken a vow to do without it. I need take no vow; my pockets are empty.'

'But you don't want them full?' said Lucas, who had moved up to them during this conversation; 'you live on your creations. It is we poor, prosy beings that need riches; we have nothing else. All a matter of imagination, isn't it?'

CHAPTER XV

A SEA CHANGE

MARIAN'S imagination wanted no other riches that evening. Little happened, or could happen, amid the carefully-arranged commonplace of dining, talking London small talk two hundred and fifty miles north of Grosvenor Square, and watching the chess-board on which black and red were now to play their game—not as in the books, each piece arranged on its proper square, with no advantage to either side—but dispersed about the field, in the blind man's buff, to which we are all condemned. The next day, and the next, rose out of the still autumnal waves, quiet since the equinox had folded its tempestuous wings; and on a morning big with fate, although innocent to behold, under its hard, sapphire heaven, where only a few streaks or bars of white appeared to have been left by an oversight, Mrs Harland was pacing the sands below Wynflete Abbey, her spirits very much altered, and for the better, from that mood in which, when last she walked that way, she could have chosen death and strangling for her portion.

She had come down thither, partly because of the pure enjoyment which an hour's loitering between rocks and waters gave, and partly on a foolish sentimental errand, as she told herself, smilingly. What was the condition of the despicable German-English version of '*Istar*' which, in her evil hour, she had flung away at that very spot, leaving it to be washed out to sea? But suppose it still there; it had her name in pencil on the cover; and how, if the great and irritable artist

lighted on such a doubtful token of admiration? It must be found, unless the ocean had swallowed it—a consummation not undesirable. Even a wretched screed, a tag, a caricature so utterly of no account, might, like Desdemona's handkerchief, rise to the dignity of a person on the stage, and play havoc with some exquisite arrangements. Already it was beckoning Marian down the rocks.

Then began a game of hide-and-seek which went on more than an hour, the *libretto* not appearing, nor any trace of it, among the long amber filaments of seaweed, cool and glaucous—so little resembling plants that grow in garden mould, but delightfully suggestive of marine caves and haunted silent glooms, and a kingdom under water with a double sky above it, through which the sun shines, not scorching, but as a perpetual moon. One could weave all sorts of fancies with these wet fernlike things turning round one's fingers, as one sauntered from lakelet to lakelet of salt blue, fringed with clean sand; but still the lost book clamoured from its hiding-place, 'Find me, find me.' It was incessantly shrill, a peewit or a seamew, whistling overhead in the air, and leading one a dance with demonlike persistence; did it mean mischief, the little witch of a volume that, two days before, signified nothing to anyone? But Marian amused herself with looking into crannies and crevices where the sand was heaped, turning it over with dainty touch, tracing the lines left along shore and a good way up the cliffs by the tide, now on the turn, and allowing her mind to go hither and thither unchecked in its ramblings, which took her off over an unsubstantial footing into dreamland. She was thinking she knew not what, and feeling happy, when lo, at an angle where one long spur of sandstone jutted into the sea, its edges fantastically broken, she lifted her eyes, and there was Gerard Elven coming towards her, he too in a waking dream, and in his hand some sea-drenched object, treasure-trove that he had just picked up, and was regarding curiously.

'My book, my book, please,' cried Marian, when her

eyes had made out the horrible wet rag, from which streams run down. 'Give me my book, Mr Elven?'

'This?' he answered, holding a wretched bundle of pages up to the light, 'was it once your book? Ah, to be sure,' scrutinising the cover closely, 'there is a name here, but the North Sea has done its best to wash it off.'

'And has not succeeded, you would say. Please, I claim my property.'

'You shall have it, madam,' with mock seriousness, 'when you have explained how it came to be lost. Pah, it has a most ancient, fish-like smell; it must have lain here an eternity. I advise you not to touch it.' He let the thing fall into a crystal cup, brimming over, which gleamed at their feet, and the volume floated in it joyously. 'We will fish it out when you have made your declaration,' said Gerard, 'if you still hold to it. How, now, was this jewel of a translation lost?'

'Not lost; I threw it away,' replied Marian. The artist kept a laughing eye upon her. 'So would you,' she continued, desperately, 'if you had read it. A jewel, indeed! Are all your plays translated so abominably?'

'Thou canst not say I did it,' answered Elven. 'But is it so unspeakable? And so, out of pure regard for the beauties of the German tongue, you left this for the winds to carry it off to sea. I am much beholden to you.'

'I know nothing of German; that horrid mixture is not English—not any tongue spoken by mortals, I should hope. It made me suspect that "*Istar*" could not be worth acting. That is my confession. Would you have more?'

He lifted the book with his cane, and kicked it into deep water. 'There's an end of it,' said he. And returning to Mrs Harland, who had begun to retrace her steps along the sand, 'you should learn enough German, at least, for your singing. That would be comparatively not difficult. Now I have heard you sing some of my compositions'—he had insisted on her doing so the day before—'and the moment is come for

declarations, I assure you that in Mrs Harland there is the stuff of a remarkable actress. Your playing is very good in its kind, not supreme, but perhaps someone has told you that already. A woman cannot master the piano; it requires too much muscle. It is your singing —the enunciation, phrasing, light and shade—which I go by. You would act superbly in a drama which was not merely operatic.'

'In one of yours?' said Marian, overpowered by this critical estimate.

'In any of mine, I think. With due schooling, of course. The higher the genius the more discipline it will take. I don't flatter; they say no German ever does. And Rudolph and I call ourselves German, though we come from a Land Debateable, old Dutch, Flemish, Rhenish, Burgundian, all are mixed in us.'

They were walking slowly under the cliffs in a delicious breeze. The white bars of cloud above them had now a tinge of lead; but the sky was one vast curtain, blue as ever, and very lofty.

'How is it you speak English so well, without a trace of accent?' inquired Marian as they went along.

'Mother was English, and we spent some years at a public school—had bursaries, scholarships, there; still, German is our language. We couldn't write our plays in any other.

'Why not?' German sounds to me less musical than Italian, or even English. I can't easily fancy it sung.'

'The German you hear people speak is one thing; the German of our poets another. I don't feel sure that we have any prose. Not much, at all events. Goethe is a mellow pipe, playing soft pastorals, clear as that blue sky, and almost as passionless. "Werther" was a tropical spring, soon past. Lessing blows great martial music out of bronze—classic bronze; he borrowed from the Romans, and is beyond imitation. Then there is Heine in golden armour, stolen from the Middle Age, with a harlequin's jacket to damp and perplex the gleam, and a Hermes' wand wreathed about with roses

and deadly nightshade. That is all the prose we can call our own.'

'But in poetry you say it is different.'

He laughed and sighed.

'Oh, my dear lady, *anch' io son pittore.* Have I not written verse? Untranslatable, as you yourself allow?'

As he was yet speaking, a boat came swiftly round the little headland from which they had been walking away; but this dialogue making them turn on the sands, they now had it full in view. The boat held a single oarsman, clad in white, who was rowing along inshore, over a shallow bottom which, when Marian descended the rocks, lay glittering in the sun. He lifted a scull and saluted.

'That is Rudolph,' cried his brother. 'Come on, old man. Get in as close as you can. Where do you hail from?'

'Rowed round from the harbour,' shouted Rudolph. 'Heard you were strolling down here. Can I take you on board?'

He was now not far from them; and Marian thought how unearthly an apparition he and his boat seemed to be—the whole so light, with fresh tones that sky and water threw up against the sandstone cliff behind. And his face was like the face of an angel; the breeze had laid a rosy finger on his cheek. Transparent depth was the word for that vision of the monk in his boat gliding along, the foam streaming away on both sides as he advanced.

'Shall we launch out a little, Mrs. Harland?' said the artist. 'I want to get the view of Wynflete which Lord Wootton has from his yacht over there, on the sea line. What do you think, Rudolph? Is the water quiet?'

'Quiet enough, and I can answer for the view. I caught a glimpse of it before turning this corner.'

The new freight was embarked in the shape of Marian, who sat in the stern and held the steering-ropes, while Gerard took an oar behind Rudolph. They pushed out gaily over the waters, finding them

not so smooth as they went towards the open. There was a swell on, which they had to avoid, and a boiling-up of yeast in several places told of sandbanks.

'It is a treacherous sea, for all its pretty ways,' said Gerard. 'As we neither of us know the chart, let us hug the shore; we can't afford to let the wind catch us. Doesn't the broken cliff, with its ruined Abbey, like a second cliff above it, put you in mind of Rosenberg, Father, Brother Rudolph?'

'It wants the pine forest and a waterfall foaming down between the trees.'

'You would see sheets of foam, I believe, running over the cliff in stormy winters,' said Marian. 'The North Sea has violent tempests, and Wynflete is not sheltered.'

'I should like that better,' was Rudolph's reply. 'To-day is deceptive; the ruins themselves look happy.'

He sighed as he spoke.

'And ruins ought never to look happy,' said Marian. 'It is meanly giving in to the ruling power.'

'I don't know,' answered the monk.

And they went on for a while in silence.

'We ought to be turning home now. Back water, Gerard,' said he, when they had been rowing some three-quarters of an hour.

'If we can,' said his brother; 'we've got into a current, hang it, that sets towards the south-west. It is taking us right on that other jutting point of rock. Now, then, back water, both.'

They were a pair of muscular, and even athletic oarsmen, and had kept up their exercise; but this heady current, enforced by a capful of wind now rising, was too much for them. All their efforts did but stay the skiff one moment; there was no turning it round; and before they knew what had come to pass, they were carried on the crest of a mountain wave rolling in, which swept them over a ridge of low rocks, now submerged and throwing up clouds of white smoke. The dreaded point was no longer in front, but in their wake, and Wynflete Abbey showed like a single tall

spire piercing the sky. To their right lay, or rather ascended, a shingly beach, narrow and precipitous, above which a sea-beaten wall, decorated with lichens or bentgrass, and full of crannies, where all manner of wild birds nested, cut off the prospect. All to the left and before them was angry water.

'We *must* turn again,' said Rudolph, decidedly.

They tried, once and twice; it was not to be done.

'Is there a storm coming?' asked Marian, looking out on the sky, which had now changed from blue to purple, and was fast filling with clouds, driven impetuously as out of an invisible sphere beyond, by the fierce gale, increasing in power every instant.

'You're not afraid?' said Gerard, earnestly.

She shook her head and smiled.

'That's right. There's nothing to fear.'

'It is Simon and Jude's day,' observed his brother to him, with an expression which denoted some feeling between faith and superstition. 'We had better look to our rowing.'

'What harm can Simon and Jude do to us?' Marian asked of Gerard. 'Are they patrons or enemies of seafaring folk?'

'It is one of the ten thousand superstitions our German forefathers brought out of the primeval forest. They look on Simon and Jude as storm gods, who demand a victim once a year—of course, on their own festival, like the kindly deities they are. But we can't allow their jurisdiction so far from home.'

All this while the brothers had been making every possible effort to keep the boat from hurling itself head foremost on the shingly beach. And the wind roared, the water raced, the sky grew blacker and blacker, and gusts of rain mingled with the foam that flew over their heads. In the murky distance, as they danced up and down, the horizon seemed to be charged with flying shadows, which were doubtless vessels making for Wynflete Harbour in face of the storm. But they three were alone, cut off from their fellows as much as if the Atlantic had rushed between them. And would their boat live in

waters that put on a malignant scowl, and roared, and tossed wildly about them, and flung them this way and that way, with an awful likeness of playing at cat and mouse? In an hour the scene of their morning's excursion was utterly changed. Thundering all along the beach they could hear the waves mounting as to a cavalry charge, with shocks innumerable, beating and beaten upon, giving battle to the cliffs, and dashed off them again, in a frightful confusion of blue water, foam, and sea sand, which darkened the air. Had anyone looked down from above on this rocking boat, he would have seen three pale faces in it, with a set and silent expression—pale, but yet calm, upon which the shadow of something new had fallen. They were expecting one of two events—death or deliverance—and either would be the passage into unknown possibilities. But Marian was not the least brave of the three. She did not scream, or faint, or thwart them in their struggles to keep the boat from foundering. She could not help them at all; and there sat the noble woman, motionless, absorbed in what the hour might bring. From time to time, the brothers glanced at her and smiled. Between them a perfect understanding had been silently established. During those rapid and occupied moments, they were all three bound in a sacred intimacy, for life or for death.

Was it to be death? An answer pealed out of the sky, as above them burst a furious raincloud, and—the wind bearing down with tenfold violence as the torrent descended—their boat was lifted clean out of the water, trembling as if an electric shock ran through its timbers, and was hurled far up the beach, even beyond the ordinary high tide, upon a bank of stones, where one of its sides was staved in; such would be the fate of an animal dashed against a row of iron spikes and rent asunder by the blow. The same tremendous stroke which had shivered that boat sent its tenants over the side, throwing them hither and thither, bleeding and partly stunned. But the men sprang instantly to their feet, and Marian would have done the like with no less courage; when, however, she tried to stand, her

ankle bent under her, and a cry of pain was forced from her lips. They raised her in their arms, carried her up, with infinite scramblings, where the waves would not, for the present at any rate, cover her with their spray, and between them supported her against the wall of rock. She was determined not to faint; but her lips working showed how intense an effort it cost her.

'You are badly hurt?' inquired Gerard at last, when they had done all that was possible. His looks expressed the concern which he felt.

She smiled. 'More pain than hurt, I think,' was her whispered reply. 'Leave me here, and save the boat. It will be washed away.'

They had forgotten it. Rudolph hurried down, seized it by the prow, and dragged it out of the flood, fastening the chain round a huge stone. He was by no means before his time; the next full charge of the waves came roaring in, and would have carried it back in the reflux far out, where whole cascades of foam were leaping and plunging like wild horses, in a frenzy of the elements. And now what was to be done?

They took sad counsel together. Impossible for Marian to scale the rocks, everywhere steep, in most places like the wall of a house; and could they wait until the storm was over, the tide gone down? But their skiff was useless and they had no means of mending it. Moreover, the rain, wind and salt water, now combined in attacking their unsheltered position, would drench them to the skin. It was not to be thought of that Mrs Harland could endure it, hurt as she was and shaken, for the long hours that must elapse until the weather cleared.

'One of us will have to attempt the passage of the St Bernard,' said the artist, cheerily. 'Which ought to go—you or I, Rudolph?'

Marian had crept to one of the salt pools a little way off, and was bathing her ankle to keep down the severe pain. 'Let Father Rudolph go,' she said. 'Unless you will leave me and go together. I can manage.'

'Very likely,' said Gerard, with tender scorn.

'Rudolph, away with you. If you were caught sight of here, in your habit as you live, the natives might take you for a ghost;—then good-bye to our chance of rescue. Go, get men, ropes—whatever is wanted—and brandy. Mrs Harland has borne up—oh, how well!—but we shall require a doctor. Only, no delay. Off, and I will—'

But his brother had tucked up the white habit into his girdle, and was clambering like a chamois from one jutting-out stone to another, as hastily as he dared; for, in his first attempt, he sent down a cloud of loose sand upon the spot where Gerard was holding Marian above the waves. They watched him with straining eyes; even the torture of the ankle seemed less while he mounted higher and higher. It was a long way to the top, circuitous and not without danger, especially from the flaws of wind that struck with all the weight of sledge-hammers upon the crumbling sandstone. And in the half-darkness they could see the floating, uncertain outline of his monk's dress, which became less distinct the further he ascended. At length he was on the verge, almost safe; but his foot slipped—he stumbled, and an avalanche of dust fell, blotting out their sky. Had Rudolph fallen with it? Their hearts fainted, and they clasped one another's hands in agony.

No, he was on the cliff; they saw him no longer, but amid all the voices and inarticulate screamings about them, they could distinguish a human cry which told them he was out of danger.

'You go, too, Gerard,' said his companion. 'Why should you be exposed to this any more? See, the water will not come so high.'

But scarcely had the words passed her lips, when it splashed over them both, in a sudden taking of the gale, which pursued them as a mad thing bent on their destruction. Gerard, as soon as the shock would let him, lifted her in his strong arms and went up step by step, painfully, but without pausing more than he could help, to a spot which he had been looking at attentively, where the couch-grass seemed more abundant. To his

unspeakable joy, it proved to be a small hollow or indentation in the rock, going down a few feet, probably where some stray animal had scooped out a shelter for itself. There Marian could partly recline. He had got Rudolph to fetch his overcoat from the skiff, and though soaking wet, it was better than no pent-house at all for Mrs Harland, over whom he now laid it. During this hard ascent neither spoke so much as a syllable. But when Marian was resting in her hollow she kept Gerard's hand awhile.

'Now you will go up—won't you?' she said pleadingly. There was an affection in the tone which, except to her sister Rosie, Marian had never in her life expressed before; she could not help wondering at her own accent.

'How long will Rudolph be?' said the other to himself, half aloud. 'The waves cannot reach us here; it is the pouring cold rain I dread for you. Take this coat of mine, too—the underside is dry.'

He was stripping it from his shoulders, when Marian, who never had let a tear wet her eyelashes all through the overpowering scene, broke into sobs. 'Oh, you Gerard Elven,' she exclaimed at last, 'are you such a man as this? Are you? And you would die for me—me, whom you did not know yesterday? I will not have it. Never, I tell you. Let us die together, if it must be so, but not you for me, oh, no—for me! Why, there is not a man or woman living—not my sister Rosie—who would do what you are doing for Marian Greystoke.' She endeavoured to rise and put back the coat which he was wrapping about her. But it did not avail. She must submit. 'At least take the other,' she said, with a child's pleading; 'take it, I say.' And he put it on, dripping as it was, and looked out seawards again. The air was clearing a little.

'If only the screen which is between us and the open sea could be lifted,' he went on musing, 'some of the vessels passing by might make us out. Mrs Harland,' he said, suddenly bending down to her, 'do you believe in prayer?'

She looked up at him. 'I don't know,' she answered

meekly. 'Would you like me to pray? I will, if you wish.'

'Yes, pray earnestly. Keep on asking—if there is anyone that can or will listen—ask that one of the ships out there may see us.'

'Do you think we shall be dead when Rudolph comes?' she asked in a low whisper.

'Pray, my dear child, pray.' He did not dare to tell her how cold and wan her looks were growing, or what a deadly chill was at his own heart. The awful, unpitying rain and wind—would they give no respite? But Marian was speaking.

'I am not sure that I mind for myself. It would be a shame if you—if this were the end of a life so great as yours.'.

'Why, how could I end better than this? On the field, like a soldier? But we sha'n't die. Take courage; try to believe you are warm; that is the thing.'

'I have no reason to go on living,' said Marian, sadly. 'What should I live for? If I could tell you my insignificant, absurd story, you would see it was one with no meaning in it—no meaning at all—only, since I married, a great fear and a great remorse. It might as well come to an end now.'

'You have a sister that you love,' said Gerard, quietly, 'so I gather. Couldn't you live for her sake?'

He was always peering out into the tempest, where it seemed as if now a fury not so terrible were lashing on the clouds.

'I have tried. Perhaps I ought to do more. She is a very sweet child, not fifteen. Sometimes, lately, the thought has occurred to me that I could be a mother to Rosie. But I was so melancholy in myself.'

'Tell me your fear and your remorse. Have you ever mentioned them? What if they were delusions?'

Great and stormy blasts filled the air again; their conversation, held in snatches, came to a dead pause. It was a long while before he heard the voice which floated about him so tremblingly.

'My fear is not a delusion, I know; but there is none of my fault in it.'

She remembered how Charlie Latimer had misjudged her. Let that go; the sting was not there. Should she speak of La Farfalla and her night in the London thoroughfares? In a few broken words she gave Gerard to understand what her trouble had been. He heard it all in silence. When the wind fell, as it now did from time to time, and the light was coming back into the clouds, he answered very softly,—

'I am not the man to judge Mr Harland. But if it will be any comfort, let me assure you that I cannot see how you were to blame. The mischief was done when you first saw those letters. Reckon the loss of your child as an accident. Don't brood over it. Take your sister and bring her up. Do you require some impersonal, unselfish interest? There is your music, your dramatic power. Use them to give pleasure to others. Ah! see, the storm is passing. If only Rudolph would come!'

'It is a long way to any village. I have driven by this road; I know the country, and it is quite lonesome. But, Mr Elven,' she was going on timidly, when he interrupted her—

'You did say Gerard, half an hour ago; not Mr Elven, please, any more.'

'I should like to have some part in helping your plans,' answered Marian, not equal now to calling him by his name. 'That would be an interest. Will you let me?'

'Will I, my dear lady? You shall have a foremost place, and do whatever your goodness prompts—if we survive this drenching. And see, we shall, we shall! Thank God, there is a boat putting towards shore from the vessel yonder. They have seen us.' And he began shouting at the top of his voice, making his two hands into a mouth-trumpet.

Marian, raising herself, as well as her pain and dizziness would allow, to a kneeling posture, and brushing away her tears, saw, beneath an ascending ladder of

clouds, struck through in places by the fitful sunlight, a boat making towards them, the white sides of which ducked up and down as it beat the surges, like some great marine fowl, at home in this wild scene. After a little she exclaimed, 'These are Lord Wootton's men. There is Marvell; he managed our boat when Lucas and I first came down to Wynflete. They have been sent from the yacht.'

'I hope they will be able to make this beach; but the sea hereabouts is full of nasty reefs, and now they are covered by the tide. Luckily their boat is stronger than ours.'

'Shall we go down, as far as we can get, to them?' asked Marian.

He considered. 'It may be advisable to try; but can you walk?'

No, there was no walking for Marian. 'We must stay, after all,' she said, relinquishing the vain attempt. 'If they can land they will clamber up to us.'

Gerard was willing to assist her, although going down seemed more perilous than scrambling up with her in his arms as he had succeeded in doing an hour ago. More than an hour, indeed—what was Rudolph about?

The sailors had now brought their long boat as close in as they dared, and were exchanging brief remarks, often cut into by the shafts of tempest, with the musician. Yes, Lord Wootton had sent them from his yacht. To land might be possible by wading through the surf; there was not the ghost of a chance that their boat could get in, it would go to pieces on the snags and spikes just under water. Let the lady stay where she was. And Marvell, with two of his companions, went boldly over the side, down into a tumult of seething foam. They had hard work to keep their footing in a current which drove always against them and was now violently wrought upon by all the energy of so savage a commotion. But wading cautiously, and taking advantage of every lull in the wind, by slow degrees they came in; and, after what seemed an endless expectation, the

forlorn and shivering couple saw, from their hollow in the cliff, friendly faces drawing nigh to them. Gerard was calmness itself; Marian, steadied by his example, would betray no emotion. They were soon taken in hand by the stalwart sailors, and borne down to the water's edge. 'No use, my men, trying the cliff with a lady on our arms,' said Marvell, 'we must back to the yacht somehow. Will your little thing there float?' pointing to the skiff. It was a wreck by this time; the waves had beaten it sorely, and completed the work began when it was hurled out of the sea. 'No; then there's nothing for it but wading.' And into the surf he plunged once more, himself and another carrying Marian between them.

The remaining yachtsmen would have done as much for Gerard; but he laughed and bade them go before him. 'I am as wet as I can ever be; and a full sponge will hold no more,' said the musician, taking to the water like a duck.

A difficult, slow passage, with many halts, and the wind flying about them, buffeting their faces, while the salt sea came up almost breast high at the stormiest parts which they had to travel. It was a curious and singular procession, as of a funeral going down into the deep, the mourners silent, carrying a still figure on uplifted arms, while winds and waves hummed their dirge in a chorus of lamentations. But it could not last for ever. The long boat received them in safety; Marian was laid on cushions, which the sailors had brought, in the stern; and they were speedily bounding towards the yacht, now glorified in a pale primrose beam that turned its yards to translucent vapours, and made it seem a thing of the sky. Lord Wootton, pacing the quarter-deck anxiously, was giving his orders as captain; and Mrs Harland, her eyes half-shut for weariness, was brought up the side, Gerard following unassisted. When Marian sank on the deck, she found herself in Pauline Latimer's arms.

'What an adventure—and what an escape!' Pauline was beginning, when shouts borne to them on the

breeze announced that help had arrived with Rudolph. His white cassock shone out vividly on the edge of the cliff; and there was a company of men with him, some already visible as gigantic flies on the precipitous sides; and a clamour of disappointment and dread was making itself heard afar off. What had become of Gerard and Marian? Had the sea taken them? Were Simon and Jude masters of the sacrifice which their day demanded? Rudolph was beside himself at not finding them. But Lord Wootton's voice, strangely metamorphosed through the speaking-trumpet, was now audible over the falling tempest. Their friends were safe on board the yacht, which would sail round to Wynflete Harbour. Let them take tidings to the Abbey—all well. In a few minutes the rocks were evacuated, after a ringing cheer which the yacht's crew answered lustily; and Rudolph was on his way to the Great House. He had not lost a moment; but, as Mrs Harland foreboded, men in that out-of-the-way nook were not to be found. Until he had reached the outskirts of Wynflete he saw only a cottage here and there with women minding their children, or else the closed doors and windows were a sign that all had gone out to their day's business.

Ah, what a change from the desolate bare cliff to this sheltered cabin and its cushions, its warmth, its sweet security! Gerard watched Marian's colour as it came back to her sallow cheeks; he was unmindful of his own plight until Lord Wootton took him by the arm and led him off into the captain's cabin, where he must array himself in the *Flying Dutchman's* livery, a little modernised, and swallow down strong waters on the approved fashion of treating the wrecked, in which he did not altogether believe. Yet he had thought of it for Marian, who, at the same instant, was declining brandy in favour of hot coffee, which Mrs Latimer brought to her side.

'It's an ill wind, certainly,' said Pauline, 'a demon wind, that blows from the Missionary Syndicate; and

yet how glad we must be that it has blown our two husbands up to London! I didn't want Charlie to go; you remonstrated with Lucas. Think—think of their agony, had they been on board this yacht an hour ago! My dear, we saw you and Mr Elven—we made *you* out quite plain—with telescopes and field-glasses, and then, the drop scene fell—the rain was as thick as a coal pit—we saw no more. And all the tacking, and shifting, and luffing, and laying on and off the shore that we had! Not the slightest use! We couldn't get a yard closer to you. I never saw a man so wild as Lord Wootton; but he has saved you, my dear Marian, positively saved you. Lord Wootton is your rescuer, quite as in an opera. What will Mr Harland say? What will Charlie think? Oh, it is delightful now it's over. A little more coffee, dear? Another wrap? What can *I* do for you? Something I must—must have some part in the story. Your ankle hurts you still? Poor Marian!'

So she went on, a chafing breeze, in puffs and volleys, which Marian did not mind now she had gone through so transcendent an experience. Death, and after death! No new state into which the last hour of all opens could be more wonderful than this. Lord Wootton had not rescued her; the deliverance came before, in those sacred moments when, for the first time, she had laid her heart bare to a loving human creature. She was still in pain from her ankle; and a recurrent sense of chill warned her, as she lay looking out of the cabin port-hole on the bright water passing, that she might have to pay a price, in sickness or fever, which the malignant agency in things would not forego. 'Only a little suffering,' she murmured, with a kind of ecstatic resignation; 'but I shall not be feeling the terror and the guilt within any more.' She was not alone now. These two brothers belonged to her, and she to them; nothing could alter that.

The afternoon now closing in was a softened version of the morning, with clouds trailing absently over the sky, no longer ranged in battle, and a penitent sun

touching in tender gleams first one part of the scene and then another, not so much lighting up these various objects as smoothing out the darkness that still clung to them. Gerard lay on deck, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy—taking in with a poet's eye the peculiar sense of things—for it has been well said that 'landscape is a mood—a spiritual experience'—and weaving all these lights and vapours, and colours of the sea and land, into some fresh story, seen as yet in dimmest outline—the music which held its meaning deep within, but already fingering an air-drawn instrument, ideal as the dream to which it gave voice and gesture. He was always excited—and flattered perhaps, as he told himself—when some incident like Marian's simple revelation of her trouble made him aware that he could feel as a man, not grind up human emotions at once into conscious art—although he was six-and-forty, a traveller through endless chapters of existence, old by centuries compared with this girl in the second year of her marriage, and an indefatigable spectator of his own soul. But to-day he had been direct, genuine, spontaneous. That was enough. He could lie here, in a passage as tranquil to his feeling as a painted picture, moving over the sea that its own violence had somewhat subdued into quietness, while the evening came softly down, a pale, unimpassioned angel, with starry eyes and silver-grey wings, spreading these over a dim, golden firmament, and whispering secretly of love. Yes—love, what else but love? In an hour which brought release to a human spirit, beautiful as a martyr's death—and such was the significance of that day for the young English girl, he felt certain—no word living enough, or potent enough in its simplicity could sum up their new friendship, except love. The evening would keep their secret; and the future—who knows?—their gladness. He looked into the starry eyes of his angel, and in the shadow of the silver-grey wings fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVI

LA JOYEUSE MESSE NOIRE

MRS GREYSTOKE was sitting at luncheon with her Princess Fortunate, in the shadowy but delightful old dining-room at Heathcote, which gave, through its tall, narrow windows, a February outlook over the terrace—memorable to Mrs Harland since an evening which now she would scarcely mark with a white stone—and away down to the brook, babbling in an afternoon sleep among its reeds and willows. The mother and daughter were *tête-à-tête*, metaphorically speaking—for their finely contrasted heads were separated by the table, across which they exchanged a conversation as little intimate as possible, although Marian had her reasons for being not only gentle but persuasive with her mother to-day.

'I know you will feel it; Rosie was always the sunshine of the house, and I, perhaps, the stormy weather,' said the lady of Heathcote. 'I have no right to run away with your darling. But you will let her come to me—not on a long visit—for good, until she has a home of her own.'

The Vicar's wife gazed sorrowfully into the depths of the glass of Madeira which she was holding; and a tear formed on her eyelash. It was the first time, probably, in all her days, that she had been called upon to make a sacrifice of that which could not be taken from her without a wound.

'I have no favourites among my children,' she said—the falsehood *obbligato* which parents utter, lest some avenging fury should lay their hearth waste—'Rosie

has always shown herself a dutiful child;'—the cut was something direct, and in itself unadvisable, but old instincts are not easily pensioned off, even when Cinderella has wedded her Prince and the stepmother (which Mrs Greystoke had ever been to Marian) is lunching at the Palace—'dutiful, and in an excellent way of becoming a Christian, though the happy day is not yet. Mr Harland, you say, would adopt her?'

'As his own daughter, and settle on her at once, in trust, a handsome allowance. I did not think of asking it; how could I, without a penny of my own? But he is very open-handed. He has taken a fancy to the child; and Letitia—the only fear is that Letitia may spoil her.'

'Ah, Marian, I am a little apprehensive of Miss Harland; she was once, I know, a fair and flourishing professor, both in her own eyes and also in the eyes of others—once she was fair for the Celestial City—'

'And now?' interrupted Marian, with a sarcastic smile of which she did not herself inwardly approve. 'And now, mother, what is she?'

'A backslider, my child; given over to carnal righteousness; conceited of her own works; full of schemes for making a bad world better, which, as Mr Edward Jonathan so pithily says, is nothing short of denying the Gospel promises. For the world is not to be bettered, but to be burnt up—yea, burnt with fire until it be utterly consumed.'

'And Letitia's good works along with it; a cheerful prospect—encouraging to beginners like myself! But Rosie, mother, shall she come?'

Her mother seemed to be lost in reflection; she was undergoing a sort of painful trance in which Rylsford Vicarage appeared forlorn and desolate—no Rosie in the house or moving about the garden, only a sad remembrance of the vanished angel everywhere. The knife that cut through her heart-strings was exceedingly keen.

'We owe everything to your dear husband,' she made reply after a while. 'He is a valiant Christian,

too; not trusting in the works of his hands, but in Jehovah Nissi—the Lord is truly his banner. With him my dear girl would be safe indeed'—Marian's features were fixed in a still solicitude; she could not have uttered a syllable to save her life—'yet I have somewhat against the idea.'

'What have you against it, except your own loss, mother? That I fully enter into, and will make as light as the change will allow.'

'Yes, it *is* a change I am thinking of—a great and blessed change, that I want to see first of all. Rosie is not yet a Christian, my dear; she needs to be converted to her Saviour.'

'What conversion?' exclaimed Mrs Harland, passionately, 'that innocent, with her bits of childish faults, in want of conversion? You talk as if she were a subject for the Missionary Syndicate, mother. Would you wash the lily in snow-water?'

Had there not been a handsome allowance to gild these black spots of tempest, who can prophecy how the dialogue would have gone on?—to waterspouts and tornadoes, in all likelihood. But *pulcræ divitiæ!*—they are your only peacemaker. Mrs Greystoke contemplated her proud daughter mournfully, but forbore to take up the glove thus defiantly thrown down. Though she would not turn out of the true way even a mile at the bidding of Mr Worldly Wiseman, yet there was sometimes no harm in speaking the language of that 'pretty young man whose name was Civility' when such great interests were at stake. And so she put by Marian's argument—which, indeed, was a lamentable proof that this clever and successful daughter of hers still dwelt in darkness and the Shadow of Death; no profit in expounding the doctrine of salvation to such an one, but there was a way still open. 'If, while she is with you in town, Rosie could sit under Mr Jonathan, I should feel easy in mind about her. And Mr Harland would agree, I am sure.'

'That terrifying preacher?' said Marian. 'Lucas took me to hear him one Sunday afternoon—or rather,

not him, but some of Bach's Passion music, which, I must grant, was worth hearing, at St Barnabas. For my sins, I had to sit out the sermon as well; it gave me a nightmare.'

'To us the discourses of Mr Edward Jonathan are a feast of fat things, and wine well refined upon the lees. I always attend his ministrations when I am in town, as you know, Marian. He will lead Rosie beside the still waters; he will make her lie down in green pastures. With our beloved Mr Jonathan, who is elect, precious, I can trust my child; but not for all the gold of Havilah, good as it is, would I leave Rosie to the care of foolish prophets, that are like the foxes in the deserts.'

'Well, if so it must be;—I do *not* think Mr Jonathan, with his fiery, fantastic notions and his millennium at the doors, a wholesome influence for Rosie. She is excitable—and at her age! It is just as well that the prophet is a man turned fifty. As you call upon her to hear these particular sermons, I will take my sister to St Barnabas.'

'And you will include the clergyman in your dinner-parties, will you not? He is a large holder of Missionary shares.'

'Let him come with the other beasts of the field. I shall certainly not ask him when we are having our own friends; that would be intolerable.'

Thus, with stipulations concerning Rosie's welfare in both worlds, the bargain was struck. And in so bewildering a cross-pattern are the threads of destiny woven —in a web that is at length no smaller than the whole world and all the ages—that here was an unsuspecting English child, who did not so much as know Gerard Elven by name, delivered up at his instance into the hands of another whom he would have loathed, had he seen the features, or caught an echo of the doctrine, of Mr Edward Jonathan. He was the unconscious engineer of a fortune that, sooner or later, might draw him after it on an iron track, into countries as yet undreamt of in his musical fantasies. That word of honourable suggestion which fell from his lips, when he was acting as father

confessor to Mrs Harland, in their wild sea-solitude, was now to bear fruit. Perhaps the jealous water-gods, having lost their desirable victims, would snatch at another as a substitute—a poor, helpless lamb, caught in a thicket of tangled human systems, from which there was no escape. Elven could never have imagined what his counsel was likely to bring forth. In Marian he recognised a woman of some most unusual and perplexing type, headstrong, wilful, unhappy—that would not make her a miracle among her sisters—but also as free from the pettiness which accompanies ill-assorted marriages and misunderstood women, as the Venus of Milo from the fripperies of the Parisian *marchande des modes*. It was that rare simplicity of temper, undefeated by a situation in which every day Mrs Harland had something to endure, that gave her a resemblance, as certain as it was dangerous, to the heroic maidens whom Elven had brought forward on his colossal stage. Would her action be as great as her character? The fascination lay there.

They had continued to study one another — the musican and the forlorn Mariana—day after day, in a month of slow-moving convalescence; Gerard, attainted by a slight but unconquerable aguish distemper, which kept him mostly by the fireside in a cosy, seaward-looking room at Wynflete Abbey, and Mrs Harland not ill, but so excited and electric as to require from the local doctor, Mr Crayke, who happened to be skilful in diagnosis of brain disease, more attention than she ever knew he had spent on her case. By all the laws of reaction, after a shock so terrible, and hours passed in the driving rain, she ought to have been down with fever. But she gave no signs of fever, except in a heightened colour and glittering eyes, and these spoke rather of a tumult within, a tempest of the mind, while the physique appeared stronger, the voice more silvery, and the movements energetic and even gay.

The discreet physician chanced to be passing upstairs on a certain pleasant afternoon, intending a visit to Mr Elven, when he caught the sound of conversation

at one of the mullioned windows, from which there was a quaint section of the old Abbey garden visible, with a broken arch at the end. Lord Wootton, his ancient visage a leaden purple, and his glove slightly trembling as he held it in a wrinkled hand, stood not far from Mrs Harland, whose eyes were directed to the scene outside. And the old man was saying in a husky whisper, *sforzando*, as if it needed emphasis, 'Then you forgive me, my dear lady? In consideration of having saved you and our dramatic genius, you overlook any little vivacities one may have yielded to?' It was always an ugly laugh that followed this kind of speech; Dr Crayke had heard it before, and in other examples. What would the rescued lady answer?

She turned round deliberately; gave back Lord Wootton's prolonged stare; and said, by no means whispering, 'Shall I get you a medal from the Humane Society, my lord? On board the yacht you behaved like a man—no less and no more; in your own house—you know whether I came to it willingly—pray, behave like a gentleman. The question always is whether you can forgive yourself?' Leaving him to digest this philosophy, Mrs Harland came slowly down to where Dr Crayke was standing, uncertain whether to advance or retreat. She passed him without a word, and when he had reached the upper landing Lord Wootton was nowhere to be seen. He took advantage of a prescription to administer the sedative which Mrs Harland would require, as a sequel to the keen encounter of their wits; and he ventured on the observation that her pulse was too high, and her love of exercise in need of watching. His patient smiled. 'I have got into Southern latitudes just now,' she said; 'you must let me enjoy the Tropics; they are new to me.'

Such was her sea-change—a transformation which put on some of the colours of the humming-bird, discovered gorgeous blossoms at midwinter, and filled the heavens with light, while every day lost more and more of the dying sun. She could not feel that it was an English November. The winds and rains that ought

to have beaten her to the ground had in them a witching harmony. Even Lucas entered into the brilliant air; the sunshine touched his figure as he hurried to and fro, his eyes glancing in search of gold and silver on the Tom Tiddler's ground, which was all he saw in existence, and his hands busy with shovel and spade, digging, always digging, and driving on the company of his fellow-serfs. He did not vex Marian as of old, when her mind was empty; she listened with polite lack of interest to his talk and his projects, intent on only one thing which could be got from the financier and the Lord of Wynflete—would they forward the plans of her new master, and not ruin them by commercial sacrilege?

Elven, as quick as a Red Indian to scent the presence of an enemy, yet compelled, if his plays were not to perish without due performance, into a path where one concession led to another, sometimes lost heart. 'I am Gulliver tied with a million pack-threads,' he would say to Marian; 'every time I pull a knife goes into my brain. Why did I let myself be coaxed down here? They want to make a commodity of me—an article to be advertised and patented, like some heal-all of a medicine, or a democratic soap. I am to be "limited," as Conrad Henle tells me, and to barter my soul for a number of shares in the Company that makes ten or fifteen per cent. out of my essence. I am to be distilled, corked up, sent out in flasks, warranted against change of climate—a sort of Apollinaris water and Hunjadi Janos! Such is art in the nineteenth century! To crown all, Lord Wootton and Mr Harland know what music is; they are not savages, but have an eye for Cressida's beauty which they bring to market. But if all I have heard at the table of the gods, and this, as I think, most humanising drama which it has been given me to compose, should turn out to be a venture in money-making—the Opera once more, its fashion and its prices, whether of stalls or of women—by Heaven, I declare I shall go mad.'

The company promoters thought him mad already. Genius always was mad; they did not require the elaborate inductions, comparisons and statistics, or the study of photographs taken in prisons and asylums, by which it had been lately sought to establish an identity between the inspirations of Shakespeare or Goethe and the falling sickness. Neither did they trouble, except to get this madman into signing order, whereby he should make over to them his rights in every drama which he had hitherto composed, or should hereafter be led to compose—the equivalent on their part being an obligation to follow strictly the lines he had drawn out for the correct execution of his music, the style of scenery to be employed, and the acting of each play whole and entire, as it stood in his score. He would take no money whatever. 'I can exist by giving concerts,' he said, 'and I am not without friends. What I want is to see, here, if possible, in the old chapter-house of the monks, a real Free Theatre, but free to the proper audience; not to John Bull—Jan Hagel, as we say in Germany — and their wives and mistresses. Someone must pay for all this, I dare say; but you are rich enough, my good lord, and you, Mr Harland. If others —of the right kind—want to subscribe, let them. But no company, no payment at the doors, and only friends of the art. It will not be easy to tell the sheep from the goats? Easy enough, I think. We knew how to do it at Rosenberg.'

If Marian could have taken her heart in her hands, she would have encouraged Gerard to leave the Abbey and to seek elsewhere the disciples of art and founders of a new freedom in it, of whom he was in quest. She remembered Mr Harland's device for getting the musician into his power—the moral obligation, more binding than any contract in pounds and pence, which a representation of '*Istar*' on his own terms would bring with it. Perhaps she was to blame—yet how little in a matter so foreign to the accepted principles and ingrained customs of a period which cannot imagine that any man ever wrote a poem, composed

a symphony, or put a brush to his canvas, without meaning, first and before all things, to make profitable merchandise of his talents, and the greater the more lucrative?

Another philosophy did reign, nevertheless, in ages called dark. 'Look at these very monks,' exclaimed the musician, as in his Vandyke dress—it was commonly affected by him—he marched to and fro, with a shifting group about him, in a vacant half hour, sufficiently warm to allow of their sauntering through the Abbey ruins while the sun was out. 'Look, I say, at these old phantoms,' he continued, apostrophising his host; 'do you believe they had dividends in view when they erected these lofty arches, made these flowers blossom in the dead stone, and filled what are now but staring eye-sockets with a heavenly firmament of colour —exercising lost arts so beautiful that the remembrance of them would drive a man distracted? Where, in those barbarous times, was their stock, their scrip, their debentures, their consols? What was the quotation for manuscripts copied out in black letter? Who expected to make a good thing out of the missals he illuminated, or the vestments he embroidered in divers colours, such as I have seen—inimitable now, though we are as clever as the devil himself in aniline dyes? Tell me that, Lord Wootton.' He ended with a laugh at his own impetuosity; and began to caress the stone rosettes which he had been praising.

'Ah,' said Mr Harland, looking up at the empty east window and rubbing his hands, 'the Abbey was their syndicate in those good old days.'

'And the Abbot, whom I succeed, their managing director,' said Lord Wootton. 'They were well paid in lands and mortmain for their architectural skill. The Abbot of Fountains could ride sixty miles from his own gate without leaving the Abbey precincts. They knew the meaning of real estate, I assure you.'

'At least every man served the community, not himself,' returned Gerard.

'Neither did he look on his service in the light of a wage-earning commodity,' said Father Rudolph, who

was that morning to quit them for the Welsh house of his order. 'In the Middle Age even handicrafts were thought to be a religious function—a priesthood. How much more the fine achievements that could not be designed—let alone executed—unless they were first shown to the artist from on high! It is the spirit of the Lord that giveth understanding. And he that serves the altar may live by the altar.'

'A living is the least Society can give its priests, prophets and artificers,' said Gerard; 'a fortune is different. To make money the end and cause of any art, even the art of exchange, is desecration.'

But Mrs Latimer, gliding over the grass, and peering through an exquisite opening in the tracery, was humming to herself,—

> 'How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!
> How pleasant it is to have money!'

'Remark, also, gentlemen,' said Conrad Henle, hitherto silent, and now putting on his stern professorial expression, 'that those in our time who make the fortune are neither priests, prophets, nor artificers. No; they are brokers—Jews of all nations—who put up the priest and his holy things to auction, and sell them to the highest bidder. I said Jews; I ought to have said Judas!'

Marian's face was towards her husband. Would he answer sarcasm with sarcasm? Not he. Harland knew the value of an imperturbable countenance, and merely smiled. His withers were unwrung; what did he care for vivid imagery? But Mr Vandyke, with a lofty air, turned to Gerard. 'Do you seriously maintain,' he said, 'that if one of us had a secret—a new explosive or a new pleasure, or anything else which was indispensable to Society—it would be a crime to get the highest possible price for it?'

Conrad broke in scornfully. 'What price do you suppose Nelson asked of England before winning the battle of Trafalgar? A couple of millions in the funds? If I remember aright, the bargain was "Victory or

Westminster Abbey." *We* do not see why every profession should not be as honourable—that is to say, as little founded on the idea of filthy lucre—as the navy or the army. There is our simple creed.'

'Uncommonly simple,' said Harland, showing his teeth pleasantly. 'That may be quite the thing where you have conscription and all that—among you Germans. We don't believe in the military idea over here. Live and let live, say I; and, above all things, freedom of contract and the spirit of enterprise, which has made the British Empire and given us the markets of the world.'

'Dear Mr Harland,' said Pauline, gently, 'isn't that from your *brouillon*, your rough draft, of the speech you are going to make to the missionaries? I do like freedom of contract—we all do in our hearts—and what is there really that money won't buy?' She was looking sideways at her beloved Charlie, thinking what a handsome purchase she had made, and how he never would have been caught except with a golden hook. It was a taking argument.

But he, as Homer sings, when he saw with how fixed a gaze Marian was regarding the composer, fell into a silent fury which burned in his eyes like anthracite—and this, beyond question, is the right word to paint Charlie Latimer—not dull but slow, hard as the heart of a diamond, with fire sleeping there unknown to itself; once kindled never put out. Pauline had some jealous cognisance of a passion that was not for her, betrayed in tremulous flushes, in movements as slight as they were sudden, of eye or lip, which Charlie himself would have suppressed, were he not the merest magnetic wire along which these currents ran whenever Mrs Harland came near.

He did not feel as the ardent young amorist who hugs his chains, and is delighted to be so sensitive to the enchantment he is undergoing. Latimer hated love and liquor in his sober moments; but he could not subdue either; he flung himself into the gulfs of speculation, caring less to succeed in his pearl-fishery than to be

somehow distracted from a craze now habitual and most tyrannous. The pearls he brought up; they were fetching a magnificent price; but ever when he was out of the brine he was into the blaze. Marian noticed, with growing fear, the shadow of a line which seemed to be tracking its way across his boyishly frank forehead, and a pucker about the eyebrows that looked like a thunder cloud. She knew he was plotting; no one else took alarm at those still waters.

He drank down the sweet poison of her looks, turned though they were away from him; and, as Pauline made her philosophic inquiry, 'What is there money will not buy?' he said, in a loose, casual way, loud enough for everyone in the Abbey ruins to overhear the words, 'By the bye, Harland, you are likely to have another man to bargain with about these plays—besides Mr Elven.'

The shot told. Immediately Latimer was the focus of all eyes; and, with cool composure, he held the group of interests in his hand, every string tightened to the pull which he was giving it.

'What man?' cried at least three voices. Charlie pulled at his moustache reflectively. 'I must give you the regular printed slip; "not at liberty to say." However, an American, who has read Elven's biography in some New York paper.'

'Well; and he offers?' said Harland. The poet and the musician — Rudolph and Gerard — were exchanging amused glances; they had no knowledge of the mysteries of finance, but by instinct they divined the first cavalry engagement, or skirmish of outposts, which might be an overture to some tremendous battle.

'He offers Mr Elven your terms, I am requested to say, and more.' It was a bolt from the blue. What did Latimer intend? Why did he do business here, in the open? Harland, as well as Lord Wootton, felt that their prospective monopoly was endangered. Marian knew she must not speak or move—the breaking of the fowler's snare would smite such music out of her voice —Gerard's escape bring with it her public revolt from

Lucas. She shook with excitement and joy kept down. What a hero would Charlie have shone in her dreams, were there not the deadly cloud over eyes and brow which made him a moody angel, setting free this bird of Paradise from the golden threads about its feet? No hero, alas!—more of a crafty marplot, double-dealing as the men he had baffled. They were helpless.

'Our terms, and more!' said Lord Wootton, savagely; 'your fellow doesn't know our terms.'

'But he will. He gives Elven a cable to wire them through me; then we will outbid you.'

'I say, Charlie,' said Harland, laying a playful finger on the young man's coat button, 'it is hardly what we expected of you—to drop your American on the table like this. Why didn't you leave him to send in his own card? It's deuced unfriendly. Come now, isn't it?'

'To you or to Elven—which?' laughed Charlie, putting Harland's finger aside. 'Freedom of contract, as you were saying, old man! Fact is, my American was writing me on other business, and he added this as a postscript. What would you have done in my place?'

'Got a commission on the job,' replied Lucas, with apparently restored good-humour.

Charlie's blood, restive that morning, mounted lightly to his eyes. 'Don't you fear; I shall get my commission,' said he. 'Leave me to look after that.'

'How very curious!' broke in his wife, who had come close up to the knot of financiers, and was inspecting the place where they had gathered. 'Charlie, what is that beautifully cut stone, with crosses marked on it, that you are standing on? It must be something peculiar.'

'Ask the monk over there,' said Charlie; 'he may know. The point is, therefore, gentlemen,' taking up his business talk, 'what is Elven to wire? We shall have to play this game hands down. How much do you bid for the trick?'

'That stone,' Father Rudolph was saying to Mrs Latimer, when he had looked all round it, as much as

the feet of the moneyed men would suffer it to be visible, 'is the altar-stone, my dear madam—the consecrated slab; where it has these crosses it was anointed with oil, and mass was read over it, or sung on high days and holidays by the Father Abbot. From its size, undoubtedly it was the high altar.'

'Observe the kind of mass Father Abbot is saying on it now,' tittered Pauline.

'*La joyeuse messe noire*, which was celebrated by him the French peasants call *l'autre*—the other sort of god,' returned Elven. 'To what base uses may we come! Here is a stone that I believe no layman dared touch—is it not so, Rudolph?—made into the pedestal of the golden calf and trampled under foot by his idolaters!'

'Hark, how he bellows!' said Rudolph; for the other three were discussing with raised voices that terrible word 'and more,' which magnified the trans-Atlantic idol to proportions unknown. The Wynflete brothers—so to denominate Wootton and Harland—suspected Latimer of treachery; but they admired him for it; he held a hand of trumps, how got was never the question, and he had put it on them to play first. 'Strong—I always thought he was not such a fool as he looked'—such was Harland's mental tribute to the rustic swain, now bent, as he did more than guess, on 'Jewing' them. Money has this in common with charity, no hatred can stand against it.

'Yet, for all his bellowing, he is only a calf,' said Conrad Henle, who was moving from one group to another, with the vigilant promptitude of a captain of Uhlans following up the enemy's line of march. He had now come to the spot where Mrs Latimer had drawn a congregation. 'What is he but a calf? And it is we who laugh at the ancient Egyptians for worshipping a bull! Their god was alive, at all events, and ate grass.'

'And this animal devours the bodies and souls of men,' observed the monk. 'I wish he could be satisfied with grass.'

'Mrs Latimer,' said Mr Browne Vandyke, hitherto

a voiceless, or hollow mask, as the Greek stage directions have it, during this interchange of ideas and sentiments. 'Mrs Latimer, you convince me that the woman's imagination—her weak point in literature and art—can be happy on occasion. That is a fine sombre vision you have conjured up, of the money-makers bargaining on the altar-stone. It throws round their undeniably sordid business the magnificent horror of sacrilege; it is a stroke that lifts them to poetry, and evokes the past, without any of those lugubrious devices which are now the fashion, and which I have leaned upon myself. Here is the contrast, bare of all setting. The dead monks will not rise out of the ground which is formed of their dust; the altar-stone will decline to shriek on which Lord Wootton is standing; yet the desecration is before our eyes. And how perfect! I fancy at such times, when accident puts forth effects unattainable even to Sophocles or Shakespeare, that an artist lurks in the background who will beat us all.'

'He is producing some fresh effects,' said Gerard Elven, as a rain-cloud stretched its wings over the roofless Abbey, and shook down on them a few passing drops. 'Look at the stage now. Would it not tell its tale before a theatrical audience? It has arranged itself. There is Lord Wootton, his face to the shattered rose of the east, his white hair blown by the wind, a ghastly gleam from above falling on him, his hands moving in some dreadful invocation of the god. Is he not a high priest, with Harland on his right, Latimer on his left, as ministering spirits. And the storm winds answer them loudly. We must shelter.'

'Under these arches,' said Vandyke, leading the way. 'Note their intense absorption,' he added, when they were grouped again and had the other party in sight. 'The rain does not wet their golden dreams. They won't budge.'

'Now they have put their heads together; the treaty is concluded,' said Mrs Latimer, 'but I have a little more fancy at your service, Mr Vandyke. Observe the cloud; it has quite wrapped itself about my poor

husband and those wicked Mammonites. See how it breaks up into a cross—the lines are silver which make it, the great beams black and solid. If Miss Harland were with us, she would say the place was haunted.'

'She has often said so,' answered Marian. 'That is one reason why she will not come to Wynflete. She thinks the dead Abbots walk about in the dark, and torment the sleepers with bad dreams.'

'Here is a bad dream on its way,' said Vandyke. The financiers were approaching; and Harland, with a drooping crest—Marian had never witnessed an attitude so humble on his part—addressing Gerard, said to him, 'My dear fellow, we are in your hands. Latimer gives us no clue to his manager's terms; we, therefore, abandon our notion of a syndicate, and are willing to carry out your design—by subscription—without profits. Lord Wootton and I guarantee against loss.'

If the magnetism which undoubtedly circulates between living beings could, at that moment, have compelled the musician to look across into Marian's passionate face, he would have been sensible of a red flag of danger held out by those burning cheeks. The current was too feeble; her intense desire to warn him sank into cowardice, while Harland's resolution, exercised habitually against opponents, overcrowed everyone there—except Latimer. The composer glanced mildly at his three enemies; he took no counsel with Rudolph or Conrad, neither of whom would interpose; and he answered, turning from Harland a little,—

'Mr Latimer, I thank you heartily. I never could have allowed my dramas to be made the stuff on which dividends are worked out, like patterns on a rag counterpane. But, this being put on one side, I give Lord Wootton the preference.'

'Then you accept his terms on this understanding,' said Charlie, not in the least affected, so it would seem, by what others might call defeat.

'I accept them, and will not go back from my word,' answered Elven, firmly.

Harland clapped his palms with an air of silent triumph. Mrs Latimer's husband was unmoved.

'Acting on the strict letter of my instructions,' he said, after a deliberate pause, and as if the model of frank dealing, 'I have now the honour to inform this company that, when I said "and more," I meant a permanent theatre to be presented by my friend to the city of Chicago, in which Mr Elven's plays would be given every other year. It was to be a State trust, and not a private enterprise.'

Astonishment on every face! On Pauline's boundless admiration.

'Why did you keep that card up your sleeve?' exclaimed Henle. 'You have played a curious game. Whose is it?'

He felt enraged on behalf of his friend.

Charlie was imperturbable.

'Not my cards,' he returned; 'I play according to my directions. If Mr Elven wishes to take back his word, nothing is signed.'

'My word is my signature,' said Gerard. 'Mr Latimer's friend has done me no wrong. I would thank the man if I knew him.'

As Marian endeavoured to read the crossed and crabbed writing of this manœuvre, the studied expression which Pauline—usually affected, but by no means on her guard—was wearing with some trouble, flashed into her a suspicion that the American who had thus outmarshalled Elven's English contractors was none else than Mr Hendrik Henshaw. Others may have suspected as much, but the inquiry was not followed up.

'Come into the house,' said Lord Wootton; 'let us get the thing in black and white. Elven will be down with fever again if we stay out here.'

And certainly Gerard's paleness had grown alarming since Latimer discovered the contents of his message.

The rain was pouring out of a dark cataract, and the clouds racing under a gale as they went out through the dreary western doorway towards home, while the

ruins took on their melancholy, storm-beaten aspect—true November by the Northern Sea.

'I wonder what the monks will say in their shrouds?' whispered Pauline to Mr Vandyke; 'we have given them a fright, I suspect, with our morning call, unhallowed moderns as we are.'

'They will talk of the witches' Sabbath and the Black Mass,' he answered. 'These were foolish lies five hundred years ago. They are realities now. And life is richer in consequence. Money, you see, buys us all—artists, priests, mechanicians, peers, country gentlemen, critics like myself, and, of course, women—but women always were bought and sold. I should pity Elven, if I did not envy and despise him. The idiot doesn't know how to make a deal.'

And with Vandyke's epigram those mixed and tragical days at Wynflete Abbey came to an end.

BOOK III

THE DESCENT OF ISTAR

Lone woods, and branches bare, and winds that sing
  Or sigh themselves to sleep, while one pale gleam
  Rests on the waters of the sullen stream
This little child must cross; but she, poor thing,
Nor bridge nor boat can see; and where's the wing
  Shall waft her over? Sweet young eyes, ye teem
  With unavailing tears! Ah me, to dream
Thou criest in vain, no God is listening!

Wilt thou leap in, my sister? Stay, oh, stay!
  Me, too, the deep is calling with its waves:
Gone, thou art gone from me, and gone the day;
  I stumble blindly in a land of graves.
Out on thee, Night, to quench that trembling ray!
  Wake, winds and lightnings, from your secret caves.

WRITTEN IN MARIAN'S *Journal.*

CHAPTER XVII

ROSA MUNDA

As this true story is moving forward to a point which I, who tell it, have long foreseen, but to the reader it lay in darkness impenetrable, I feel that the sullen warning note, sounded once and again in earlier pages, may have come all too faint on ears not prepared to listen. Our beautiful American stream, which has brought us hither, down through many a vale, and sometimes along the edge of a precipice or high mountain wall, is now, like the terrible Rio Colorado, come to the mouth of a canyon whereinto it must plunge; and between narrow boundaries of rock, the everlasting granite, which towers on this side and that, making a prison of the world, and reducing the sky itself to a line of stormy splendour, the river pours along, desirous to escape, yet doomed to all the leagues of travel that intervene until it has left these desolate ranges, on which neither tree nor shrub can find a footing, and where the grass that springs up on the hillside is withered down to the root.

On such a canyon we are entering, but the way to it, unless one knew the region well, would seem a path of pleasant adventures, hung as it was with every blossom of the spring, with hyacinths and roses in abundance, and the hedges, tender with new-born leaves, full of singing birds, whose love-notes, frequent as passionate, trilled and shivered, and rang out gloriously upon the general sunshine of the air. A procession sweeping along, with music for its accompaniment, could not have made a gayer sight, though everyone taking

part in it were apparelled as a king; for the promise of youth and love's first intoxication did more to fill heart and eyes than all the masters of the revels could have done, though they had spent Solomon's treasures on feasting and adornment. This glamour of roses and young love did, nevertheless, throw a fitful light in advance, which, as the gloom swallowed it, gave a certain menacing shape and huge proportion to the darkness beyond.

Marian had persuaded Mrs Greystoke to let Rosie be taken from her, and on a set day they left home for London, the mother feeling that trial of her faith was now to be made, while her daughter, like innocent Isaac, dreamt only of a journey up some mountain never yet scaled by her young feet. Once, at Marian's wedding, where she was bridesmaid, the girl had seen London and this new kind of existence through a golden glass; it dazzled rather than drew her on with its innumerable sparklings, and she was glad to be at quiet Rylsford again. Shy and thoughtful, but once in a way expressing her thoughts vividly in the words with which her mind was stored from reading her Bible, Rosie had looked on in amaze, and listened in a sort of bewilderment when the great sight took her on the right hand as on the left of a people given up to business, to pleasure, to traffic.

'Mother,' she said, when they were in the train, committed to the resolution which meant so much for them all, 'I have been reading the Book of Ezekiel, and I want to ask you, isn't London the same as Tyrus that the prophet speaks of in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth chapters, "Situate at the entry of the sea, a merchant of the people for many isles?"'

'My dear Rosie,' said Mrs Greystoke, laying a fond hand upon the yellow curl that was straying on the girl's shoulder, 'Tyrus has been made like the top of a rock; it is a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; how can London be as Tyrus?'

'But, mother, if you just change the names, and put London instead of Tyrus in Ezekiel, the picture would be exactly what I saw when I went up to be Marian's

bridesmaid. I have thought of it ever since. And I used to tease governess about it. Mother, doesn't God like big towns? Because, in the Bible, wherever it speaks of Babylon, or this Tyrus, or Zidon, or Nineveh—and then, in Revelations, there is Babylon again—it is always threatening them with the judgments of God. And Jesus did not love Jerusalem as He loved Nazareth, I am sure. See how He weeps over Jerusalem! He couldn't be happy there as He was on the lake side, among the lilies.'

She sank into a wistful silence, meditating on the scene she had called up.

'All those towns were idolatrous,' said Mrs Greystoke, shortly.

'And in London nobody worships idols?'

'Idols in London? No, my dear; that is fulfilled which was written of old, "The idols He shall utterly abolish." It is only the heathen that bow down to wood and stone. However, the missionary syndicate will turn them from their evil ways.'

'But Paul says, "The covetous man, who is an idolater"; aren't people in London like the Tyrians, Babylonians, and all those—covetous? Isn't their heart lifted up because of their riches? And that was the sin of the Prince of Tyrus. God says so in the fifth verse of the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel.'

'Well, take care your heart is not lifted up, Rosie. For, thanks to our dear Mr Harland, you are going to be rich. If you were not,' she continued, kissing the child's forehead, 'I never should have the courage to let my Rosamund go away. You will be rich; it is a sign of grace on you.'

'I wish Jesus was in London now,' said the girl, abruptly, after an interval, during which her Bible, open at those gorgeous pictured verses of the prophet who deals in visible symbols more than any other, lay on her knee, and seemed to be sending up the colour of them in a flaming rainbow to her imagination.

'Why? How could He be in London when He is in Heaven, you dear child?'

'I know, but still if He were? It is often and often in my mind. Those words of the hymn, mother, make me cry sometimes—"I think when I read that sweet story of old;" and, oh, how "I should like to have been with Him then." I should, and I am not with Him. I never, never shall be.' Her tears came running down in a sudden shower, brightening the colour on the delicate cheek, adding a strange lustre to those gentle brown eyes which held in them so deep a sadness, so unquenchable a longing. Ah, you purblind, you infatuated mother! And why must it be that many mothers have so small a gift of observation? Could you but have known what those tears signified! You saw in them only a child's waywardness, not to be forgiven, had it been any but this favourite Rosamund.

'Hush! my dear, hush! it will never do to cry. What are you crying for? You will spoil your looks, just when they should be at their best. Here, take my handkerchief. Wipe your eyes and think of the excellent friend and counsellor you will have in Mr Edward Jonathan. Take your troubles to him; he is an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, even as was Apollos. He will be to you an evangelist, and his church the house of the Interpreter. He is certain to show you that which will be profitable. 'But,' smiling, and in good humour, 'don't begin as if you were Miss Much Afraid. That will never do. Think of your Christian parents, of Emmeline, converted when she was hardly more than your age; of your good brother Lucas, given to traffic, indeed, yet he has sold all and bought the pearl of great price. Can you not be even as one of these? You can, never fear, the Lord being your helper.'

These words of consolation, uttered in entire good faith, were not thrown away. They acted as tonics or cordials on a malady which lay too deep for Mrs Greystoke's treatment. A little broadening of the heart followed them. It was a dark, wintry afternoon, and the travellers had the carriage to themselves, in

at the windows of which peered a lonesome twilight. Rosie lay, nestled close to her mother, and they said no more then. By-and-by, the elder lady began, in her rich low tones, to sing one of the hymns in which they had often joined together, as if she were hushing the child to sleep. But Rosie would take her part, too, almost whispering the words, finding in them a vague sense of comfort—'Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear.' The darkness, gathering outside, gave those murmured syllables a power, triumphant in the mother to whom they had long been the heralds of her own election, and in the child awakening the love she felt, which had in it no confidence but only a timid petition, if, perchance, it might at length be heard. But she could sing with her whole heart the lines that came after. They were the very breathing of her soul:—

> 'Abide with me from morn to eve,
> For without Thee I cannot live;
> Abide with me when night is nigh,
> For without Thee I dare not die.'

With a simple chant like this did they two comfort themselves; and on arriving at Fenimore Place, the still and stately lights of the London mansion, with its ivory and ebony, its emeralds, purple, broidered work and fine linen, and its modern music, surpassing far that which was once heard in Tyrus on tabrets and pipes, appeared to rebuke the faint-hearted child. There was an air of perfect grace and reasonableness in all these things that smiled at her, even while it put down the presumption in which she had just been indulging; for who was Rosie Greystoke to condemn as iniquity the traffic by whose magic might a palace had been reared to welcome her? And how kind everyone was!

Between Rosie and her cousin, Charlie Latimer, a secret bond of affection, more powerful than either could once have dreamt, was their attachment to Marian; and now all three were constantly meeting.

But the first visit that Rosie paid to La Scala did not find her cousin at home. It was on a deceptively sunny afternoon, about the beginning of April, when the feeling of spring in the air, and a wealth of forward blossom in the gardens, admirably disposed under Pauline's directions round Vivian Lodge, threw the sensitive child into a fit of musing as she and Mrs Harland sought their hostess, where she flitted to and fro, a lovely dragon-fly, about the edge of a little lake, shaded by alders, in a miniature setting at once formal and picturesque. Coming up the path, Rosie perceived that Mrs Latimer was not alone. Seldom, indeed, was that lady alone. It cost her nothing to declare that she never could abide her own company more than half an hour at a time. But now, on a lucid background of sky, reflected in the shining water, almost opposite Rosie, appeared the tall, slender shape of a boy in cricketing flannels, his head bare and crowned with curls as yellow, and almost as long, as her own. His face, somewhat in shadow, was pale, with a slight tinge of olive; the features small and regular, their outline a perfect oval, or nearly such; and 'the most far-away eyes,' said Rosie to herself, she had ever seen. They did not see her, one would have been tempted to say, for the lad was looking down into the water, Narcissus-like, attending or not, as the case might be, to Pauline's intermittent trills and bravuras of conversation. When she moved, however, he did not stand contemplating his watery lineaments, but came forward as well.

Mrs Latimer, having kissed Rosie, who felt an uncomfortable sensation during the process, not unlike that which Cristabel might have endured in the embrace of the Lady Geraldine, took the boy's hand as if she were presenting him at Court. 'My nephew, Harry Oberlin,' she said, 'or perhaps, more correctly, my *ci-devant* nephew, whom his schoolmates in Pennsylvania call Oberon. Don't they, Harry?'

'They did,' returned Harry, with the shadow of a smile on his rather full lips, which had many moods in

them. 'Now they won't have much chance.' By instinct his hand was held out to Mrs Harland, who liked the show of impetuosity more than she minded the breach of etiquette. Rosie followed her sister's example, and a strong, warm clasp made amends for the icy shiver that had answered Pauline's embrace.

'Harry is thinking of Oxford, and has come to be ground, or coached, or whatever they call it, before he matriculates. I proposed that he should stay here, and Charlie is quite glad of a third in our performance. You get on famously with Charlie, though you never saw him till a week ago. That I will say, Harry.

'I like him,' said Oberlin, simply, as if that settled the matter. 'But he doesn't remind me a bit of Uncle Henshaw.' He looked down at his brown cricket shoes, considering the points of difference.

'Nor me,' began Pauline; but her gravity fled, and the sentence ended in demi-semi-quavers of laughter. She was fain to check herself severely, remembering the children. 'You never saw the garden before,' she observed to Rosie, and put on as formally polite an expression as she could muster. 'Harry, show Miss Greystoke the silver pheasants and the peacocks, and perhaps she would like to see your pony. Mrs Harland and I are going to discuss the musical drama.'

Harry took hold of Rosie's hand again—there was a troublesome gate to pass through. As he went first and turned about to help her their eyes met. At once they broke out into the same exclamation. 'Your eyes are brown, like mine,' said Oberlin, and so said she; and it was true, and they blushed, and laughed, and felt they couldn't tell how—ashamed, perhaps—and Rosie had to make the best of it in opening the troublesome gate.

'Mine are the only pair of brown eyes in the family,' said the girl, when they were walking towards the pheasants. 'We seem to have all sorts of eyes. Marian —my sister—you noticed how like violets her's are—violets under water.'

'Didn't notice at all,' was Harry's answer. This

might have sounded not altogether civil, but the tone is everything, and Harry meant no offence. Rosie knew *that* by his meditative fashion of moving along at her side, 'looking as though he would find a hare,' as many a youth has done in the like situation.

'But Marian has beautiful eyes,' insisted his companion, loyally resolute to extract a compliment from him.

'She is not the only one,' said the boy, laconically, with a glance her way. 'Do you care so much about silver pheasants? Come and see my pony first?'

They went to see the pony. 'Isn't he a beauty?' said Oberlin, making the proud creature turn and come to them. 'Uncle Charlie gave him to me. I call him Uncle Charlie—not the pony, his name's Lincoln, our President, you know—but Mrs Latimer's new husband. You like riding, I hope. All English girls ride to hounds, so they say. Were you ever in at the death?'

Rosie thought this a new kind of boy. She had never met an American except Pauline—if Pauline was not rather a South African—and none of the boys at Rylsford talked as fast as this dreamy Oberlin, who did not look her way a second time, yet had made friends immediately. His voice—the music of a flute pitched in a key somewhat higher than usual—had an accent of the slightest, not displeasing.

'Girls of my age don't ride to hounds. Very few girls of any age do in our parts; people call them fast if they do. But I love riding.'

'And you're not afraid? You don't mind a hard canter?'

'I like it. I'm afraid of plenty of things, but on a nice little cob I forget all about them. It is the only time when I'm not afraid.' Her voice had fallen to a whisper, and her brown eyes were fixed on his in a strangely pathetic manner. He thought how a dog looked up at him once, when he was going to thrash it for something it had done, and he never thrashed any dog afterwards. Now, the lad's heart was all one glow of pity, seeing the same look in a human face.

'You mustn't be frightened,' he said in the tenderest way, speaking, as she had done, under his breath. 'What is there to frighten you?'

She shook her head sorrowfully, and made no answer. Oh, how it cut the lad to the quick! 'Shall we ride in the Park to-morrow morning?' he cried, spiriting himself up, and patting Lincoln's neck to hide his strong emotion. 'It's an off-day for me. Do say you will come.'

'If Marian says I may.' The sweetness of that purely human whisper, which was all compassion, untouched even by the shadowy love that springs up between lads and lasses in their first dawn of romance, had given Rosie a thrill.

'We can play at being cousins,' Harry threw in by way of encouragement. And then, leading her out to the lake again as if there were no silver pheasants to be seen, 'Let us ask your sister now,' he went on delightedly. 'We could have the jolliest little ride, and you lunch here, and we would get Pauline—Auntie—to go with us somewhere in the afternoon. Not sightseeing; I'm no hand at that, but a cricket match at Lord's. The Australians will be having their second innings.'

Now, in his little friend's eyes, the Australians were a less clearly-marked and real tribe than the Jebusites or the Perrizites, whom Israel, by reason of his transgressions, could not drive out of the land. But she would follow that voice, with its not displeasing accent, anywhere; it had suddenly, though but for the flash of a moment, scattered those dim and dismal apprehensions that hung as a cloud upon her spirits day and night. She would have been as disappointed as Oberlin had Mrs Harland denied them this charming to-morrow. But it was not Marian's way to refuse the child anything she asked. Marian had been refused so many things herself at home, and what did all the severity end in? She gave her consent at once. They would all lunch at La Scala, and go to see the Southern cricketers make a score.

Next morning was April in its prime—'the sweet o' the year'—with playful breezes that touched the riders' cheeks lightly, and lifted their golden hair as, under the pensive English sky, they cantered along, side by side, the trees bending above them, the landscape flying, and when they turned, the sword-like edge of the Serpentine striking into their eyes, yet only as if it gave a supremely satisfying brightness to the joy they were making their own. The children—for Harry was but a month or two over sixteen, and Rosie seemed the embodiment of girlhood, looking younger than her years—drew many glances after them as they bounded along on their ponies.

What could be prettier, indeed? 'There goes youth and happiness,' sighed a rheumatic old lady, who was wheeled in a bath-chair on the gravel, by which they darted like swallows over a meadow. The lad was happy, ecstatically so; his blood tingled in his veins, and a warmth, more genial than he would ever feel in manlier days, came coursing down to his heart and nestled there. He could have sung, or shouted, or cut any mad capers, in such high delight was he. And Rosie felt the blissful hour as escape into some harmless world, where sin was not, nor the phantoms that made her walk slowly with them on other days, muttering, while they shuffled their leaden feet on the hard road, of vengeance and judgment to come. She laughed, and enjoyed her laughter; the pace could not be too fast now; but Oberlin, a capital horseman for his age, was wary no less than bold; he took care they should not rush into accidents. A philosophic person, watching them as they cantered round—a great writer and a Pessimist, engaged upon the composition of a '*New Method of Hedonism*,' as he called his treatise—was moved by their sight, in the odd cynical way and overpowering passion for contrarieties, which are besetting sins of the metaphysician, to add a postscript to the chapter he was then finishing in his head, with a motto from Shelley, which ran thus:—

'Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above,
And the music-stirring motions of these soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain.'

But he was a Pessimist, we have said, a Kill-joy, a masculine witch of Endor, who called up the gods under a cloak, and bade them prophesy of evil. The children, not heeding his 'methods,' cantered and cantered away, listening to a measure which their ponies' mad feet improvised and their own pulses repeated, such as no dance-music ever excelled in swift or lightsome motion. 'Why does that nice-looking boy nod and smile at us?' Rosie asked him, when they had slackened their pace a little. 'Is he a friend of yours?'

'I never saw him till now,' returned Harry, looking after the young equestrian who had shot by them; 'but he is a friend, for we are both Americans. Didn't you see the Stars and Stripes he wears at his button-hole? Look at mine. That is our Freemasonry when we come to Europe.' And he showed her a tiny American flag which he wore in his jacket. She was excited by the lad's own enthusiasm, and could not help crying out,—

'How fond you are of your country.' He lifted his hat when she said it. 'No English boy would go about with a Union Jack instead of an orchid or a rosebud in his coat. If he did, the other boys would laugh at him. But why do you wear your hair long? That boy did, too. Is it an American sign?'

'Prize fighters cut their hair close all round in our country,' said Oberlin. 'We don't like to be taken for prize fighters. I will have it cut short all the same, Miss Rosie, to please you.' He had the frankest smile in the world as he spoke.

'It wouldn't please me at all,' answered Rosie. 'Let us canter and catch up your friend.' But he was gone, and they must leave their heavenly exercise too, and be at La Scala in time for the luncheon they would both devour. Joy has a keen appetite—bless his young heart!—and the very healthiest of digestions. If he

could get this tough old world on his plate, especially at the age of sixteen and at certain indescribable moments, he would make a final meal of it, to the satisfaction, undoubtedly, of all in whose throat it has hitherto stuck, and who would be well pleased to attempt the mastication of a fresh morsel, not quite so trying to jaws and teeth. In the highest spirits, therefore, they arrived at Vivian Lodge, where Rosie was to change her riding habit and meet Mrs Harland. They saw the ponies led away—they unwilling, them unwilling—from the door, and were on the first of the famous golden stairs, when a sight, which neither had expected, froze them into strange and immovable silence.

And yet—what was it? Above them, on the landing which was overarched by the cunningly-devised blue heaven, a crystal firmament, keeping its sapphire in all seasons, and separated from them by the glittering steps, with angels like birds of Paradise enamelling the walls, stood the tall, dark figure of a man, thus beheld seeming not less than colossal, his face turned towards the boy and girl as they thought of mounting up, the right arm stretched out magisterially, as though to enforce some dreadful word just spoken, and the whole attitude stern and forbidding. Yet, after all, but a clergyman, draped in the sables of his order, tall enough to be ungainly in his proportions, and a blot upon the well-varied, smiling composition—the golden stairs, the winged messengers, the blue overhead—into which, by some fatality, the man had intruded. 'Oh, but what eyes!' murmured Harry to his companion, catching sight of her terror also, as he saw their extraordinary effect upon Rosie. For at once all colour fled from her lips and cheek—colour a little while ago fresh and springlike as those flowers which Proserpine, frighted, let fall from Dis's waggon. She would have fallen, too, on the glittering stair, had not Harry put his strong arm about her for the instant, until she came to herself again. The lad's eyes shot fire in reply to the sinister glare from above. 'Do you know who it is?' he asked Rosie, not letting her stir. 'Who is it? Who is that

man?' He felt all the ardour of a young St George when for the first time the dragon's great yellow eyes, aflame with some passion he cannot understand, meet his. Who was the dragon that, by his mere aspect, had so terrified the girl?

'It is Mr Jonathan,' she said with an effort, 'our clergyman.'

Harry, with a courage born of love and shyness, stood gazing at the gigantic apparition, coolly, as he might go over the story of a picture hung on the wall before him. But these reconnoitrings, which take minutes to describe, are done in the lightning-flash whereby we seize upon first impressions, favourable or the reverse. When he had ended his survey—a matter of moments—Harry knew that he should hate Mr Jonathan. That was enough for the opening scene. Rosie and he would now have to come into closer contact with the dragon; pass him at any rate. But, Heavens, he was not coming down! Behind him fluttered the morning splendours of Pauline; and she betrayed no symptoms of fear; she was altogether at her ease with the monster, whose mighty arm would have shivered her to atoms with one blow. A gay, sprightly, laughing creature did she seem, too rapid on the wing, probably, for his great awkward strokes.

'Her grapes are fully ripe, you were saying, Mr Jonathan.' The voice flew all round him like a bird. 'Stay for lunch, and taste mine. I pride myself on raising the finest clusters in London, or in Babylon, if you prefer it. You really must not go. We are expecting Mrs Harland. I think you have seen Miss Rose Greystoke already. And this I call my nephew, —in Babylon,—Harry Oberlin.'

They were all collected under the artificial firmament, up to which Mr Jonathan towered above them. But, if he had the advantage of height, theirs was the benefit of contrast; for they appeared as a group of angels with golden heads, and Satan in the midst. He —Mr Jonathan, not the other—kept a dark, flashing eye upon Rosie, and held out his huge hand to Oberlin,

who, contriving not to see it, bowed and fell on one side.

'It was Mr Harland I wished to see—and counted upon meeting here, as he appointed. If his wife can give me the information I require, your clusters shall be eaten in measure, as all things should be, however excellent. But I have a Bible class in another Christian drawing-room at three.'

'Here is the lady; ask her,' said Pauline. 'Mr Harland will not disappoint you; I know his ways; he is punctuality itself.'

Marian, who was taking off her wraps in the hall, overheard this exchange of sentiments. She did not hurry, but when she was on the last stair halted, and said in a clear ringing voice to the clergyman, 'I have no knowledge of Mr Harland's business; I can tell you nothing about his speculations. They do not interest me.'

Mr Jonathan looked at her severely. 'But you have a large interest in them, my dear Madam. You hold many thousands of missionary stock, as appears from the list of proprietors.'

'Do I?' returned Marian, carelessly; 'then it must be as I hold shares in the kingdom of Heaven, without being aware of it. Mr Harland will know.'

During this diversion the children had fled to their rooms, whence they did not come forth again until the gong was sounding for luncheon. Harland had been true to his time, and Charlie Latimer took his place at the head of the table. Conversation, rising and falling in gusts, would have been worth studying just then, as a capital instance of the likeness between mental and physical atmospheres, both of which have their depressions, their cyclones and anti-cyclones, their currents and tides, their ebb and flow. It was Harland's duty, if one might judge, to keep the great preacher up to a pitch of monologue, while the others threw in a word now and again reluctantly, as if loth to interrupt his eloquence. But not all the others. Harry and Rosie, sitting side by side, exchanged the rare but significant

glances which were fast ripening their acquaintance as under a July sun. They were silent as mice, and behaved with exemplary good manners—the boy not much troubling about Mr Jonathan so long as he talked to the public at large, and Rosie somewhat recovered from her fright. Nor did Marian help the conversation when it threatened to flag. She was listening, however, with a terrible sense of scorn for the husband who could retail his journeys in Egypt and Palestine so scripturally in the delighted ear of the minister, and inquire, as of an oracle, whether, in his view, the drying up of the Euphrates must be understood to the letter—might it imply very extensive geographical changes wrought by time? or even the formation of canals, fed by the river diverted from its course? And would there be anything violent in supposing that commercial enterprise laying a hand on these long neglected regions, might, bring about a fulfilment of prophecy, and so forth? 'Which of these is the schemer and the hypocrite?' she asked herself. Or were both playing a game of hazard?

With feelings not unlike those that had put their spurs into Harry Oberlin, she fixed upon Mr Jonathan, as he spread his immense hands, leaned forward in his chair, and expounded the doctrine of the Millennium, Harland giving attentive ear, Charlie lost in calculations of his own, and Pauline wishing the prophet would eat his grapes and go off to his Bible class. The light fell directly upon Mr Jonathan's features, where he sat, a monumental effigy, but alive and gesticulating. He was not a man to be overlooked in a crowd. The long, pinched, sallow countenance had a beauty of its own; but the mouth, wide and thin-lipped, was, perhaps, cruel; the long white teeth often seemed wolfish; and the blazing eyes had a cast in them, which added not a little to their effect. They were eyes against which few could keep their own clear and unmoved. By a natural instinct many men, and more women, turned their gaze aside, or sought the ground, when Mr Jonathan looked their way. His bushy black eye-

brows and lion's mane, in which there was not a grey hair, gave him no very distant resemblance to Danton, whom he would have rivalled in energy, and doubtless have sent to the scaffold. But in his rolling organ voice every tone was audible, from the clash of the kettle drums to the wailing of the violin; a more perfect instrument of speech no orator in his own day could boast—all things were possible to it. And who was there that did not thrill and shake under its marvellous power? Not Marian, assuredly; she spoke the truth to Mrs Greystoke—it had given her a nightmare when first she attended St Barnabas. And she detested the man; but his accent subdued or troubled her, as none except her father's had ever done. It was a vile enchantment, not carrying conviction to her reason in the least; no, she would have given all those missionary shares, could she have bought with them some antidote to his destroying charm. She knew, better than young Harry Oberlin, what it was that she hated in the Reverend Edward Jonathan.

Sufficiently did she hate him—since her mother had insisted on putting Rosie into those giant's hands of his—to inquire what the preacher had done; where lived before he fixed his thunders at St Barnabas; and whether in his record there was any human grief or disappointment from which to argue that he might be softened by a woman's appeal. These questions were echoed back in confused and perplexing answers. No one could tell Mr Jonathan's age; some had dared to say that Jonathan was not his real name. Miss Harland's opinion concerning him we might, from her usual tone, suppose to be peculiar; and it was so to the verge of lunacy. With some Christian mystics, and a crowd of philosophers, this excellent lady believed in the immortality of the soul on a scheme not set down in church catechisms. Her faith was that dying meant no more than beginning a fresh cycle of existence—not, however, in a world beyond the tomb but on our earth, among the visible actors who play

their part along with us. By the most singular of coincidences, Letitia Harland, who read no German, expressed herself in the words of a recent German philosopher on this awful subject; she was fond of saying, 'If you ask where the dead are that must be raised, look round and you will see them. They are raised already.' If she did not assert that the resurrection was altogether past, still less did she think it was only to come in the distant future. No, it was a law perpetually fulfilled and fulfilling. And she would enlarge on the perfect reproduction of historical characters, age after age—on the indestructible types, the identity of faces, the long lines of family portraits, in which we see one set of lineaments recurring, despite intermarriages among so many branches as should have sufficed to ruin all resemblance. What could be the explanation of these things, she demanded, unless we allow a cyclic movement, in which the revolving wheel brings back the dead as they once lived on earth—their souls no less than their bodies?

Mr Edward Jonathan was a ghost of this kind—a *revenant*, to employ the old French word which expresses her creed so exactly. She was even assured that his name had, to discerning ears, a sound of recurrence; but this she would not unravel when questions were put as to her meaning. All she consented to add was her own conviction—a disturbing one in any event—that Mr Jonathan belonged to a 'plane,' as she called it, of inferior spiritual discernment; that he was a breeder of troublesome fancies, a dweller in the sphere of imagery and delusion; and though a prophet to men and women less enlightened than himself, simply a fungus growth on the tree of knowledge, and a cancer at the heart of progress.

About all this, which painted a legendary and fantastic background to Mr Jonathan's life, it was impossible that Marian should be concerned. She began to listen, however, when Miss Harland, quitting her sibylline tripod, came to the stories current or credible, which took

for their theme not the clergyman's relation to his ancestry, but his early days, before he had flamed out as one of the lights of London. 'It was not yesterday that my brother Lucas first made friends with this horribly puzzling character,' she said, closing her eyes, as she lay resting on the sofa-like chair which served as her couch of pain and meditation. 'I can recall the shock, as of a torpedo, tingling all through me, with which I saw him entering our poor little home in Liverpool. We were not much beyond paupers at that time; but I had strength, now no longer mine, and Lucas abounded in hopes for this world, which he was grasping with both hands, as well as for the world to come, on which his heart was then set.'

'He has changed,' said Marian, reflectively, smoothing her friend's pillow. 'Then you disliked Mr Jonathan from the beginning?'

'I thought him a lunatic, cunning where his own ends gave him the inspiration which madmen have, and infectious to those—they are the common sort—in whose nature no strong positive principle or belief is stored up. Such,' lowering her voice, and whispering cautiously, 'you must have perceived is Mr Harland's disposition. He is acquisitive, wholly immersed in means which he cannot direct to a higher purpose. It was hidden from me, in those days, that my brother had only negative qualities; that as a pattern merchant, trafficker, and go-between, he could not enter into the essence of what he was merely selling, and neither using nor producing. Am I too dark for you in these sayings?'

'Not at all. I have thought this before, though I could never have said it. But Mr Jonathan—? What was the story about him?'

'He came from somewhere North—this side the Border; had been a Nonconformist. Wonderfully impetuous, but learned in divinity, self-denying, and as impressive in the pulpit as he is now. He dreamed dreams and saw the heavens opened in the watches of the night—so people were fond of telling wherever

he was announced to preach. And he talked of himself as a converted sinner—who knows but he had good reason?'

'Why did he leave his chapel-going friends? Or did they leave him?'

'I am coming to that. You would have taken for granted that among people of such a stamp dreams and intimations from the unseen would have been welcome. But the opposite came to pass. They wanted lively preachers; they fell into a panic when Mr Jonathan took to prophesying, and drew out a new scheme of church government from those last chapters in Ezekiel which no one, so far as I can tell, has ever been able to expound. This did not suit them at all. Mr Jonathan was tried for heresy and insubordination, found guilty, and turned out on the street. Some of his disciples followed him; the rest gave him up. Among the followers was one he would gladly have left behind—the woman who, at our Liverpool period, was on the point of becoming his wife.'

'She followed him to Liverpool?'

'And married him there. A fresh-coloured, ill-looking, and, I am afraid, somewhat under-bred person—a great deal too fond of ribbons in her hat—older than himself, a Miss Eversley, not in any way his equal. For there can be no question that Mr Jonathan has extraordinary gifts—on his own low level—and though I do reckon him to be sly and malicious, I admit his mad sincerity. He is not an impostor but a monomaniac. Try to bear the difference in mind; you may require it some day. He is getting a terrible hold of Lucas, thanks to this Missionary concern, of which he intends to be head and captain.'

Marian's interest in Harland had sunk so low that she minded comparatively not at all who got hold of him. They were strangers, chained to the same oar in a galley which, for aught she cared, might founder if the storm took it. Her alarm, as yet not near its culmination, was for the child Rosie.

'They were an ill-matched pair; and the influence

which Eliza—we knew them well enough to call them by their names—tried to exert on Edward Jonathan, bad as it was, did him less harm than her daily presence. A sensible woman might have taught him a little humanity; but his wife, light, frivolous, worldly, ambitious for them both, drove him deeper down into the delusions which were gaining him a reputation at the expense of the best gifts of spiritual discernment and the light from above. You see, the marriage on his part was a *mariage forcé*. He did what he was compelled to do.'

'Ah, now I am hearing Mr Jonathan's secret,' said Marian. 'A rumour of this kind is floating in Society, and I thought you would know.'

'We shall never hear the whole story in his lifetime, depend upon it. Another young lady enters at this point. You have read about her somewhere, I don't doubt. She was then Miss Harriet Singleton; afterwards—and indeed, not many weeks after the Liverpool wedding — she accepted Mr Coverdale, now Lord Cotswold.'

'The famous political leader? It was a happy exchange, considering where Lord Cotswold is now in power and prosperity.'

Miss Harland did not reply at once. 'No, it was a bad business altogether,' she said with a deep sigh. 'Harriet Singleton died a miserable disappointed woman. Eliza lost several children, grew fractious and a termagant, and wasted in a decline which, I was always persuaded, came on as she realised that her husband never would have married her but to avoid the scandal of a broken promise. With Harriet Singleton, who had some evanescent gleams of a very pure and noble character, he might have risen above himself. He is, on the contrary, a slave, bound in chains to his own system, or drugged with the hallucinations which he dispenses in such gorgeous cups to the fools that flock round him. But, if *they* are fools, he is none. He believes what he says; only, what he says is a lie.'

'And every Miss Singleton who worships at St

Barnabas worships *him*,' exclaimed Marian, with a bitter laugh. 'Why did not Eliza survive until her husband was the most admired preacher in London? She has left a vacancy which will not remain long, I should think.'

'There is no telling. Mr Jonathan strikes me as more fanatical than ever. He may denounce marriage, or advocate the Mormons, or invent a fresh plan of his own for the coming Millennium. But his immediate design is to get this rich and flourishing Syndicate into his own hands. The prophet would then be a king, and Lucas his lieutenant. I wish we knew what Mr Latimer has to say about them both. If we had him for an ally, we could bring Mr Jonathan to his knees. Try to find out, my dear Marian.'

'Easily said,' thought Marian, in whose remembrance this conversation was vividly present, while she observed the faces of the men that sat round Pauline's table. Which of them could she pretend to construe? Harland, with restless, glancing eyes, florid complexion, and teeth on which smiles glittered incessantly, offered an image of the most engaging good-humour — and not a false one; herein lay the deception which might be described by learned men as proceeding from the sign to the thing signified. It was a good humour perfectly compatible with those tender mercies of the wicked which are cruel. On Charlie Latimer's face indulgence in small but repeated dozes of stimulants had begun to thicken the fine colour, and to paint a purple rim about his eyes— nothing much, one would say at first, the inevitable decline of a fair young man's good looks under stress of excitement, worry, railway travelling, and high pressure, as he advances towards thirty. The beautiful open features might be getting a hard look; and yet everyone, except a mystic like Letitia, would talk of their candid expression. Charlie, though not one of the Board of Directors, held a firm grasp on this Missionary enterprise. And he seemed always to come in, at a side door, as we might say, when Harland's new schemes

were on foot, having somehow acquired an interest in them, which he exercised absolutely at his own discretion. He did not affect to believe in the spiritual aims announced with unction and emphasis by those who drew up the programme. He was saying even now, while Marian examined his soldierly countenance — always admirable to her, yet as a picture might be, not stirring any sentiment—'When you gentlemen have settled about the Euphrates, I have a meeting to attend. I take it, all *you* want, Harland,' with a sardonic smile, 'is to discount the Millennium on your own terms. Mr Jonathan is well posted up in that market.'

'Have I been holding forth too long?' asked the preacher, smiling; he did not smile agreeably, his teeth were too conspicuous. Harry thought of the wolf in '*Little Red Riding Hood*.'

They rose from table, and Pauline inquired of the lad, 'Shall we be too late for your Australians?'

'Not if we go *at once*,' he answered, with strong emphasis on the adverb. He dreaded lest Mr Jonathan should take possession of Rosie, and catechise her about the discourse which had nearly spoiled their luncheon.

But the preacher flew at nobler game. His hand was laid on Mr Harland's shoulder. 'We will walk together until our roads separate,' said he to the man of money. 'There is one point in the sixteenth of Revelations, concerning which it would be well if you were enlightened. I can give you the heads before we get to Mrs Ransome's.' Lucas suffered himself meekly to be led away.

'Do you think the end of the world is coming soon?' said Rosie in an undertone to Oberlin, as they sat watching the Australians.

He laughed, but did not turn his head. 'Oh, well cut; well cut, Fletcher,' he shouted, 'and, by Jove, what a fluke! Yes, run, of course. End of the world soon, Miss Rosie? No, not I. How can it, when America has only just joined the firm? My old darkie, Kerenhappuch, that nursed me, didn't believe it either, though she was a Methodist. "No, no, massa

Harry," she said, "de Lord send for 'Mericans tousand year back, if world gwin' to be burnt up soon." Our time is coming ; and I reckon—as you English think we always do reckon — but we don't, you know — the American part will last as long as Europe and Asia put together. I'd have told Mr Jonathan that if he asked me. Glad he is not Cousin Jonathan, aren't you? Hallo, Fletcher's out.' And he began clapping as for a wager.

Rosie looked at her friend with admiration, and wondered if America would survive the General Judgment. It was a problem which Mr Jonathan had not discussed.

CHAPTER XVIII

PRINCESS, POET AND MUSICIAN

THE Italians have a graceful custom, inherited from their charming old Pagan forefathers, of decorating the lintels of their churches with scarlet hangings, gold-embroidered, and strewing the entrance with myrtle and laurel leaves, on days when the patron saint keeps his festival and they wait upon him in his own house. If Marian Harland could have expressed her joy and delight, on a day long-hoped for in Fenimore Place, what banners of love she would have displayed over the dark London doorway! What pyramids of flowers, and arches triumphal, would she not have set up! For Gerard Elven was coming. He was coming, on the face of things merely as one of those passing guests whom her great house received and let go again, after the fashion of such caravanserais, where none stays except during a night or nights, and then the cloaked visitor knocks, and the company follow him, one by one, to that long home in which there is neither feasting nor giving to feast. Coming only to be entertained for the time that he should spend in a duty most ungrateful, 'feeding with a dish of scraps,' as he termed it indignantly, the chance audiences that a concert, an *olio*, a miscellaneous setting out of ill-assorted viands, will collect in the height of the London season. But to Marian's fancy, Gerard was coming not as a guest but as a master, with all the glory of his music sounding and his skirts one long trail of light—descending out of the heaven in which genius ever dwells, of its

own fair devices and its plastic inventions, that praise it as they live and move. Had he been some immortal that had music for his gift, a breathing god come down to intoxicate with never-yet-heard melodies, or to play on the pipe of his enchantments, she could not have given him a warmer welcome in her heart. The myrtles and the laurels must be exchanged for less emblematic flowers on her dinner-table; and not until he was within would he perceive, amid the common stateliness of these ordered appointments, that a human kindness, far from common, was expressed in them.

He came, and the evening of his arrival—a calm, clear day, with slowly fading colours, warm in the west, tinging the whole sky with faintish purple, as of henna darkening the finger-tips, themselves rosy—that evening was divinely strange. In the Japanese drawing-room, its windows open on the balcony, whence they could see into the Park—a silent bas-relief on which the trees and the grass were as if painted in dark or vivid green—there sat or stirred in pleasant commotion about Gerard the four whom he would have chosen to meet him—his grave and beautiful hostess, the fairy figure of Miss Harland, to-night astonishingly well and in brilliant spirits, and his two angels, as he soon learned to call them, Rosie and Oberlin.

Genius, resembling in this all the great manifestations of life, is a state not uniform, but subject to rhythmic periods, with storms which break at last into sunny golden weather; and the sunlight was now streaming over Gerard. 'I have come back a richer man than I went,' he said, with a gay carelessness, turning to the children his merry face, 'not in coin, you know, my lad of the merchant-tribe'—to Oberlin. 'If I earned, I gave to those poor fellows who used to be with me in Bohemia in the dear old time. But richer in some beautiful bits of country I brought away as I travelled, and the remembrance of that fine Italian acting and singing at Bologna. Really, there are none to equal the Italians, once they get the right guidance; they must get it, they can't give it to themselves. Inspiration is of the North;

form of the South. Do you catch my meaning, Master Harry?' taking the boy's hand with a friendly shake.

'I will think over it,' answered Harry, looking up at him. 'I never saw a great man before; you must give me time.'

Gerard exchanged a glance with Mrs Harland, who was smiling at the boy's bold speech. 'How wise these youngsters are getting!' he said. 'A great man? No one can tell who is great or small in our days, Harry, more than you can measure the Alps when you climb up and down their sides. We don't carry about our own perspective.'

'But you are famous, anyhow,' insisted the young American. 'Everybody knows who your are. Your name is in all the newspapers. I read it at school.'

Gerard laughed. 'Then my name is famous, not I.'

'And your music, too,' Oberlin insisted. 'Only they say it has no tunes, and the barrel organs can't play it; you ought to invent some tunes. Is it very hard to make them up?'

The composer was excessively amused. He replied with great seriousness, 'Very; the best are stolen—stolen from gypsies, country folk, fishermen and weavers. I am not sure I could invent any tunes; all I do is to compose variations on them.'

'Tell us about Bohemia,' said Rosie, who had been sitting silent, close to Gerard's chair, 'and the Princess. What was she like?' Rosie showed not the slightest fear of Mr Elven, though never setting eyes on him until now.

'She wasn't a real Princess? Not royal?' inquired Oberlin. 'How did she get the title? Auntie called her a Jewess. Could she be one as well as the other?'

Marian felt a deeper curiosity than she was willing to own, which must not find expression, touching the romantic episode in Bohemia, so frequently dressed up, in raiment perhaps of the flimsiest rumours, but these had been thrown round some adventure, some tragedy, as it might appear, that filled a wide space in Gerard's past. There were allusions, guesses, dark sentences, in

many a book the leaves of which, since their meeting at Wynflete, she had turned over—the writing of friends and foes, to whom Elven's name was a trumpet of war; these fragments, however, had so little coherence that she knew not what to make of them. Now, scanning the musician's face, with intent simply to be guided by his feeling, she thought a shadow fell upon it.

'Rosie is fond of picture books and fairy tales at fifteen, as she was at eleven,' said Mrs Harland, quietly, 'but you must not be troubled to tell her a fairy tale now. Shall I play one of your songs—for Harry—just to convince him there is tune in it?'

'Not at all,' replied the composer, brushing away from his forehead the abundant dark hair—a sign that he had been reflecting and had come to a resolution. 'Let Miss Rosie keep her liking for fairy tales. Mine is one. Yes, Harry—you will want me to call you Harry, won't you?—if there is the least touch of greatness in what I have done, there is far more in what I have been —of that kind which we look for in life, and which the poets glorify as romance. But the best part can never be told; I couldn't even tell it to myself, now it lies behind me like the sunset of a lovely yesterday that went down in sorrow.'

'Still, she was a Princess, I know,' said Rosie, triumphing over the lad.

'She was, and I was not a Prince. What was I?' asked the musician laughingly.

'Oh, a poet is as good as a prince,' cried Oberlin; 'you were that; you couldn't be more.'

'Thank you, my lad; there spoke the real democrat —the American that is to be, when you have sent your millionaires packing—your Charles I., and James II. and George III.—whose golden images at present you fall down before and worship.'

'I don't want to be a millionaire; I should like to—to write something that wouldn't die in a hurry,' stammered Oberlin, letting the secret of his heart gush from his lips, and ready to sink into the floor, ashamed of himself when he had done it.

'An American of to-morrow! I knew it, Harry, when you looked up at me with those brown eyes. Well, see you don't quench the sacred fire beneath a bushel of dollars. I had none at starting in life, happily. My father was a village choirmaster; and when he took, as he did pretty early, to the management of the stage, we had a free entrance to the side-scenes, but not much else, my brother and I.'

'Where is Father Rudolph now?' asked Marian. She was still apprehensive of confidences, which might transpose their music from its pleasant key to the distressing and sombre depths where it would be an echo of sorrows best left sleeping. But Gerard was full of animation.

'Oh, don't you know Rudolph is in London, not half an hour's walk from this house? They have made him Superior of the Convent. He promised me that he would call. I say promised; for he never goes anywhere except on duty.'

'We are privileged,' said Miss Harland. 'When he comes, I will inquire of him what he would say to Mr Jonathan's ideas. I wish we could bring them together.'

'Oh, Mr Jonathan!' exclaimed Harry, with a face of strong dislike. 'Please don't let Mr Jonathan come into the story. How old were you, sir, when you wrote your first play? Because the papers talked of it as a wonder for a lad of that age.'

'Not as old as you, Harry. It *was* a wonder. I killed all the characters in the fourth act, and they had to appear as ghosts in the fifth. You don't believe me? I've got the manuscript still. Luckily, no publisher would take the thing.'

'It is very original, but very true,' said Letitia, seriously; 'the fifth act is always in the unseen. Our play breaks off before the *dénouement*. You should work that up again.'

'Thirty-five ghosts, I think there were,' observed Elven. 'I made them all sing as they entered to the sound of the bagpipe. It was a churchyard in resurrection.'

'And how soon did you meet the Princess?' Of course it was Rosie's question, and raised a laugh.

'Come, my dear, sit where I can see you, and I will give you the whole story—or, at least, all you would like of it. The Princess—I begin, you observe, in the middle; always do that, Harry, it is a rule of art—the Princess lived in a lonely old castle, six hundred years old, perched on a rock that went up into the clouds; and the castle and the crag were dark with age, blackened with mosses or with fires, buried in pine woods, stormed about with winds and rains, and almost encircled by a rushing river into which fell a dozen cascades. Is that how you like them, Rosie? I can give you any amount of pines, and as many more waterfalls. Only say the word.'

'Yes, I like them so. Please go on. And the Princess—'

'And the Princess,' he continued obediently, 'was not six hundred years old, or sixty, or—but I never could see that she was old at all. Age had nothing to say to the Princess Helen. The ancient gentleman bowed low when he met her, smiled, and passed on. Perhaps she was the same age as Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. But not an Egyptian; no, Harry is right—a Jewess, with eyes like the antelope's, full and soft—a rich dark tone of colour, quite Oriental; but Eastern women are lazy, indolent, dream their life away—and the Princess Helen never was at rest. Call her a dancing flame; it was how I thought of her. And the flame flickered and danced all the more easily that it lived in a mouldering medieval tower on a rock, with waters, winds, pine forests murmuring all round it. Not always lived there, mind you. As a girl, Helen had gone over half the world. Once, they say, she danced for her dinner. That was long, long ago. She kept a royal table at Rosenberg.'

'When did she hear of you?' asked Harry. 'In her dancing days, was it?'

'By no means. I was not even celebrated by my reputation, as Heine says of Meyerbeer, until the lady

had seen her husband the Prince, whom she first knew in Paris.'

'And who was he? A Royalty—or one of those Italians that our American girls marry sometimes?'

'Ah, they do; much better did they marry down in Vermont or Massachusetts among their own people. Yes, Harry, an Italian, but as Royal as even you could wish, with your austere republican sentiments. It was the Prince of Ferrara, Hercules the Eighteenth, a man as handsome as a Greek statue, and almost as precious an antique; but only a show, a fair outside, nothing more. Prince Hercules had once reigned; he never governed, and his dynasty fell before a hundred Piedmontese *bersaglieri* and a *plébiscite*. When he married his Jewish bride, he was a Prince *in partibus*—that is to say, his kingdom was at Paris, which he liked much more than Ferrara, with its grass-grown streets and its dungeons of a palace.'

'She might as well have married a picture,' exclaimed Rosie; 'in the tale books a picture sometimes comes to life. Well, and then?'

'And then—let me think! A picture? No, Hercules did not come to life. But he had his millions, and his fine old name, and his fine old face, and a sham court, and he was really fond of Helen. And so, when she felt as happy as in her dancing days—which, I can tell you, is no small thing to say—just as she came to the door of her splendid house after a ball at the Russian Embassy, on a morning so clear that the sky seemed to be made of glass, at the moment she was stepping out of her carriage, she saw—' and Gerard stopped; his expression, which had been the half comic air of a story-teller, changed to something painful.

But the children were too anxious to notice it, and cried, 'Yes, she saw. What did she see?'

'My dears, it is not a fairy tale, but a true sad story. The Princess Helen, stepping from her carriage at the dawn of day, saw her husband borne into the house—dead—by their servants in livery, with all the pomp and circumstance of a Royal procession. He had been

shot through the heart while she was dancing her last minuet.'

'But who shot the Prince?' asked Harry in a low voice, after the silence which followed on Gerard's narrative.

'It does not signify who shot him,' replied the musician, quietly. 'He was shot in a duel, fairly; no one ever pretended otherwise. But I may say that the Prince showed courage, and died like a man. The Princess nearly went out of her mind. She had none but strangers, not a single relative, about her, and the Prince's family—they had never been kind to Helen—were now most ungenerous. They turned her out of the splendid house; tried to take away her fortune, and did take away her character. She behaved nobly; in all that had happened she was not much to blame, or perhaps at all. So, leaving Paris and the world, she wandered into Bohemia, and there bought Rosenberg from its old masters—impoverished feudal lords. The Emperor was very good to the poor distracted lady, admitting her rank as the wife of Prince Hercules, and allowing the innocent parade of a Court, in which—more from love of her husband's memory than from a love of show, I think—the Princess indulged. Here, then, it was, my dear,' turning to Rosie, 'that I came to such high renown. As her mind recovered, and with it the scenes of childhood shone out in their romantic freshness, a passion for the stage took possession of her. The doctors encouraged it. I am afraid on much the same principle as when playing cards were invented to amuse the mad King of France. Not that Her Royal Highness was mad; no, but she must be amused, and this was the way. Her major-domo came to Rudolph and me at Stuttgart, bearing a letter in her own hand, which promised all we could possibly ask if we would manage her theatre in that queer old out-of-the-way castle. Now what we asked was the acting of our Plays. And we went back with the major-domo and took Rosenberg by storm.'

'Didn't the Princess build a theatre for you?' inquired Harry.

'Not exactly build, but arrange according to our plan. The great and happy thing in all this was that we could be absolute masters of the audience, the orchestra, the actors, and the acting. Conrad accompanied us. Ah! what days we spent at Rosenberg! Never the like again, I fear—unless Mr Harland takes a leaf out of the Princess's volume,' to Marian, with a courteous deference that just escaped a tinge of irony, 'he must be severe in his choice of spectators; all lies in that.'

'And isn't there any more?' said Rosie, disappointed. 'How does it end? There must be an end. Not "lived happy ever after." She couldn't, when her Prince was in his grave.' Oberlin looked at the little maiden kindly; the sentiment was one he approved.

'I suppose it must all be told,' said Gerard, sighing as he spoke, with an eye upon his hostess. 'You were thinking, Rosie, the picture might come to life. And I answered that it never did. Well, when we had acted our Plays, or those we selected from all I have written—I don't care for the early ones, in my first style—a strange thing happened. The picture, let us say, so long as it showed Prince Hercules living, was a motionless cloth, painted in oils. But after he was dead and gone, a spirit came into it. The Princess, we knew at length, was haunted by her husband's figure; it stayed with her wherever she went; it invaded all the Castle.'

'My dear Mr Elven,' cried Letitia, excitedly, 'what did I say to you? Here is the fifth act of your first play. Did it never strike you before?'

'I believe you are right,' answered the musician in a serious tone. 'That comes as near my play as it well can. But your seeing it, while I passed it by without observation, is what I meant when I told our friend Harry that we don't carry about our own perspective. It also confirms a doctrine of Schopenhauer's — the individual life is arranged from the beginning. My childish play was, perhaps, symbolic, or a veiled and abstruse parable of what I have to go through. Except the thirty-five ghosts,' he concluded, smiling a little in

the midst of his philosophy. 'So many on the stage would jostle one another down.'

'But the end?' said Miss Harland. 'Could that ghost be laid?'

'No, there was no laying it. From the ninth or tenth night of our representation, it appears, the Princess felt as if a cloud of darkness were descending about her—at first only dimming the atmosphere, but gradually growing thicker and less impalpable; and as it grew dense—as it became a solid surface in front of her—the dead Prince rose out of it, faintly, distinctly, brilliantly, until she saw him between herself and every other human creature. Then he was her companion day and night—a familiar, an obsession.'

'How did he seem to regard his wife?' said Marian. 'Was he pleased or angry?'

'Like the living man, he varied, or perhaps, and I should say certainly, much more than the living man. She beheld him now placable and quiet, now frowning a little, and, in hours of depression or excitement, wrathful as a tempest. But she dreaded those moments in which he rose from the bier, and looking her steadfastly between the eyes, put his hand to the heart which had been shot through. No blood was ever to be seen—nothing but a slight foam on his half-opened lips.'

'Did he speak to his wife at any time? Whisper, scream, call out suddenly?' asked Letitia.

'Once, in a critical hour, not long before we left Rosenberg—indeed, the night before—Helen heard the shriek which drove her to insanity—heard or thought she heard? Who is equal to these things? She told—my brother Rudolph.' Gerard did not say these words as readily as he had pronounced the beginning of the sentence. 'Whatever it was, she told him. And he has never told me, or anyone else. We quitted the Castle against the unhappy lady's command, yet in obedience, as Rudolph did assure me, to that intimation.'

'But the ghost did not kill her?' said Rosie, whose face had lost its tender brightness while the story drew towards this lugubrious close.

'No, not by its own hand of power. The Princess lingered, many months after we left, in a state of extreme nervous tension, seeing no one, talking to no one, occupied always in tending a waxen figure of her husband, made after minute directions by the most consummate artists at Vienna, and laid on a couch in her sleeping-chamber. She would have the Castle guarded as in old times—armed watchers at every entrance, in the great hall, along the corridors; she did, I imagine, confuse at last the wax image with the body of Prince Hercules; and her terror was lest it should be stolen from her. Rudolph saw the lady once as she was keeping this dreary vigil; she then failed to recognise him; perhaps he ought to have gone in his former dress, not in the habit of an Olivetan. The second or third day after his visit—we never could learn the precise date—her servants found the Princess laid out, a corpse, in splendidly embroidered grave clothes, which it was likely she had fashioned for herself, by the side of the wax effigy. She must have died without a struggle, without a groan.'

'And the Castle of Rosenberg should have been swallowed down by an earthquake, or tossed into the river that very night!' exclaimed Oberlin, leaping up in his excitement.

'Nothing more happened. The Castle was not affected by this tragedy more than by all the strange things it had witnessed during its six hundred years. The shadow upon it was already as deep as night; how would you add to its gloom? But we, who have seen our Princess, beautiful as a star, and only glittering restlessly, incessantly, in her wild sorrow, we carry some of that gloom in our hearts. If I tell the tale lightly, my child,' said Elven, laying his hand on Rosie's shoulder, 'it is that you may not think it so terrible. There is suffering in it; there is death; but there is love most of all.'

The ghost of a smile flitted over Rosie's lips, but no voice was left in her. By-and-by, when Marian sat down to play one of the master's lyrics, she whispered

to Harry, 'It was no use; Mr Jonathan would come into the story, though you tried to keep him out.' And on the lad's asking, 'Where did he come in?' she put up her hand as if shutting out an ugly phantom from sight. 'Where? Can't you watch him as he sits up on the bier, and puts a hand to his side, looking at you all the while, straight between the eyes? A dead man come alive again! It *is* Mr Jonathan.'

This would have confirmed Miss Harland's doctrine of the second birth, had she overheard what Rosie was saying.

But Marian had other thoughts more akin to every-day, though not less perplexing, which for some time afterwards kept her fully occupied, without attempting to solve the riddle of Mr Jonathan's personality. They were at once glad and sorrowful. Why did Gerard tell the story of Rosenberg in the presence of the children, with an air of comparative indifference? Was it to convince her that between Princess and musician there never had been more than friendship on one side and patronage on the other? What man, whose heart had suffered during those extraordinary and scarcely-to-be-understood incidents as only a lover's can, would have touched them in so lightly? There was feeling, doubtless, but never a thrill of passion; at the most pity, mingled with an artist's overmastering sense of the possibilities that lurk in all such tragedies to set themselves to words or music, and pass into the idealised life of representation. He did not then, for all the hints of biographers and the strong language of rumour, fulfil that young tenor's part which had been assigned to him, while his plays were acting in the old Bohemian Castle. Rather, if any conclusion might be drawn from half words and suspended accents, the hero was Rudolph, not Gerard. Then—'Well,' she interrupted her musings to ask in an explosion of self-contempt, 'what then? How can it matter to me if, in those vanished and irrevocable days, there was or was not the feeling we call love to bind these two? Love, indeed? Is it love that

he could offer—that I could take? I, married to Mr Lucas Harland, have no love but duty, and very like it is to the wasting vigil of the Princess, where she tends, not a living and breathing man, but an image made of wax—tends it, and pines away in the presence of it, and dies by its side. This husband of mine has no soul, and not much of a heart, I grant you; but he is my husband—he, and not another. Gerard will leave our Castle of Rosenberg when the hour strikes. What will become of me? I must not think of it. Let me see to Rosie; be her Providence, if I can.'

In former times, Marian would have set her fancies down in the diary where she sometimes wrote still; but they were too dangerous, and, like those envenomed letters of La Farfalla, might awake to wound and dart long tongues into her flesh if she gave them nourishment. Nevertheless, unable to lay her burden down, she strove towards a moment of oblivion, and instead of treacherous prose set herself to exercises in versemaking, which would always be thought impersonal, the literary promenades of an amateur in quest of amusement. She had taken lessons, also, from a German master—was reading, and getting by heart the poems which Gerard's music had so superbly dramatised; she gave herself the curious uncanny pleasure which attends on a recognition of anyone we know, in his double form of life, who is at once our friend and an author, expressing to the world sentiments or moods we do not perceive in our acquaintance with him. The concerts to which Marian now went religiously, taking Rosie and Oberlin as often as she could, were also a revelation, though in sudden, swift-flying passages, after the fashion of Alpine scenery caught in the whirl of the St Gothard railway journey. Brilliant effects, high lights, a passionate impulse that came leaping athwart orchestral bravuras with the force and frenzy of a torrent from above the skyline. Impulse, mightier than she had ever dreamt, but clothed in beauty —the rainbow hanging over its headlong descent. This was a Gerard Elven she had only guessed at—in whose deep rendering of reality, translated through his own

spirit into a language new as the morning, every other man dwindled to a shadow, lost all significance, and was an expletive, a *Nebensache*, or superfluous adjunct, a creature of mist and fantasy, hollow and vain. Even Latimer did not appear so solid or threatening, in comparison with what he had been, since a passion expressing itself in forms that he—the monosyllabic Norseman—never approached, was audible to her in these great symphonies. How it might be off the stage Marian did not stop to consider. At this tumultuous period she was far more capable of grasping the sublime in tones or in literature than of apportioning the elements and forces that are arrayed to work out the struggle of existence. She had entered, as many another in a situation resembling hers, on a trance, with her eyes open but her judgment asleep. Who could reach the somnambulist out of the real world? Mr Edward Jonathan? He, least of all, you would say. Or, if he did continue to rouse her up, what a risk in his uncouth interference? She was walking, at present quite secure, on the dreadful edge. A hand, put forth to save, might send her into the abyss.

Two things were happening, which between them, as the shuttle sent across the loom, together wove a web, the pattern whereof might now, to some disinterested but keen-eyed looker-on, be growing discernible. As Marian drew away from her husband, he, with an agreeable relapse into habits never quite foregone, sought elsewhere the amusement, or the tenderness, or the mere filling up of vacant hours, that could not be got in Fenimore Place. Harland was one of those men who have been acutely marked down by physiognomists, 'quick in their motions, cold at the centre.' Let him be thought fickle—willing to pay for his fancies, not less willing to drop them after a while; or, as his wife said, *à propos* of a little accident at the dinner-table, 'Lucas, when you have drunk your champagne, you don't mind what happens to the glass.' And he replied, showing those pleasant teeth, 'Why should I? Glasses are cheap.' For this rare kind of

glass, called Marian Greystoke, he had laid out a fortune; and he would always maintain that the breakage was none of his. The sparkle and the flavour seemed now to be evanescent; there was too much ice in the cup; if he held it carelessly, whose the blame? However, not fickle, but something lighter, 'volatile,' perhaps, is the epithet for a man whose temperament is vapour, floating over the lava rock of self-interest,—a fiery vapour, which, when its flame goes out, sinks into the hard dust of Vesuvius. He admired his wife; her pride, her accomplishments, her success in Society, were all items on the credit side of the account; nor did he feel their estrangement so piercingly as she did, after they returned from the North. If that attraction waned, another was winning power—simply as a play, not the least harm in it; but Pauline certainly amused him. And Latimer could be influenced always through his coquettish, good-natured wife, whose devotion to the somewhat intractable young man was notorious. Anyhow, the financier was more and more to be found in the evening at La Scala. And Marian, who went there too, let the game proceed. She did not feel hurt. If her cousin Charlie declined to interfere, she suspected that he had his reasons.

This was the first thing which threw its lines across their destiny. The second was as little like it as we may conceive. Shall we call it a play within a play? Everyone knows of such complexities in his own life, and how hard it is, on attempting a description of them, to pull the threads out and lay them side by side. A little drama, then, it was, complete in itself, dark enough for any Elizabethan playwright, or even the gloomy Webster, which one tries to fancy as a dead infant wearing a rose upon its breast. And here is Mr Jonathan's arm stretched out, to pull the lady back from the brink—perhaps unavailingly. Not that he knew what he was doing. He had the long sight of the visionary to whom centuries are minute-guns announcing the end of all things; but the things at his feet he could not see.

It was a high day at St Barnabas. Thither came flocking from the East and the West, as it were into the Kingdom of Heaven, the new train bands—let us call them by a military name, borrowed from their Puritan ancestors—missionaries, decorous in their sombre vestments, severe or smiling of countenance; for both kinds were visible, and even among the heralds of salvation one might descry now a jovial preacher of glad tidings, and anon the cynic, mounted on his tub, instead of dwelling peaceably therein. 'All these and more came flocking,' but not to Pandemonium, rather to the pulling down, erasing, and passing the plough evangelical over that stronghold. Young Bands of Hope mingled with Sons and Daughters of Perseverance—Societies which had a long record, a full treasury, and their own magazines, walked, a little apart, yet in loose brotherhood, by the fringes of new regiments enrolled but yesterday. And pious women, fashionable or austere in the garments of gladness, were filling all the benches, while stewards ran to and fro, in despair and delight, as the roomy church took in its congregation, and more pressed in after these, and the air grew dense and suffocating. Soon there was nothing that looked cool anywhere, except the whitewash on those virtuous walls, innocent of decorations, and certainly affording no scope for the peril of idolatry. The organ, a fine instrument, rolled forth its welcome in pealing thunders or soft harmonies; and in the shadow thereof sat Gerard Elven, with Mrs Harland and the two angels to keep him company. The event of the day was to be Mr Edward Jonathan's discourse in aid of the Missionary Syndicate; and by way of pointing his text, the Societies which had consented to throw themselves into so vast an enterprise were now represented by delegations from all over the land.

Perched at this height, Gerard, scanning the unlovely church, thought how desolate a sanctuary it must be when the people were not in it—a place where no God, enamoured of the beauty of holiness, would choose to dwell. But this mere framework now signified less

than nothing. A vast human assembly, for whatever purpose called together, always made on him a singularly pathetic impression, not much unlike the melancholy that drew tears from the eyes of the Persian King at Salamis. In its very silence there came to him the sound of many voices—a mighty 'resonant figure'—the burden of which was pain and anguish, sorrow and death, aspiration without achievement. Now, these hundreds and hundreds all gazing one way, eager but yet dull, in the throes of an enthusiasm on which they could not bestow any taking outward semblance; dominated by an obscure sense of their nearness to heavenly influences, and yet so insular, so manifestly the average and the common of their kind—Israel bereft of its cloudy light and its pillar of fire—how could they not perceive that they, as much as the heathen, were in need of some miraculous change, to lift them up and show them a better prospect than the plastered roof over their heads? Thus he, somewhat arrogantly mayhap, as one who lives with beautiful things around him, when he sees the Philistine host. They, meanwhile, sat impatiently expecting, until the organ should sound, prelusive of the hymn in which all could join—and after the hymn the Reverend Edward Jonathan.

Ah, now is the prelude, quickening all hearts, and the congregation bursts into song, confusedly yet with some fine rapture, sustained by words in themselves not unfitting, but much more by the mountain waves of melody and organ music, on which they float upwards in a jubilant strain. 'Lord, her watch thy church is keeping'—so they break out as if a challenge were sent up on high; and after they enforce it, crying passionately, 'Lord Almighty, give the word'—'Give the word,' they repeat, they insist, 'Give the word;' until, as wearied by their own united and thrice-uttered petition, they fall back on the thought with which they began:—

> 'Lo! her watch thy church is keeping;
> Come, Lord Jesus, come to reign.'

While the Amen was echoing from end to end of St Barnabas, a tall, gaunt figure, known to many, but by all viewed with eager streaming faces, rose above the pulpit, and Edward Jonathan looked out upon his audience as a conqueror. He had not chosen the hymn, or minded what the people would be singing. Nevertheless, when he gave out his text, it might well appear as the response to that final exclamation. For he cried, in his imperious and declamatory fashion, 'But the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom for ever, yea, for ever and ever.' Then the hundreds of eager streaming faces relaxed, and put on an air of comfort; his hearers knew that Mr Jonathan, founding himself on Daniel, would prophesy before them that day and hour. This they had come out to see—the rare spectacle of a man inspired, yielding to the impulse that swayed him then and there, as much a victim or a trophy of the unexpected as they whom no breath of the Spirit had quickened. Gerard began to admire the unconscious discernment in his neighbours, which made them aware that an improvisation flying on wings through heaven, and proclaiming a message wherein it believes, is on a par with the noblest drama, is poetry in action, and a sublime histrionic. But while he was reflecting, the sevenfold thunders marched in their glory and their terror above them all.

A new power, notwithstanding. Different from his anticipation, not in the regal tones of the preacher, who triumphed openly as the chariot of an impetuous eloquence bore him along; neither in the allegories, allusions, symbols and similitudes, that went with him in gorgeous array, before and behind, like a Roman legion carrying the *spolia opima* and rejoicing with their Emperor, himself in choicest apparel, crowned with victory. Great and striking as the rhetoric of this heated composition manifestly was, the fire that burst out, consuming preacher and hearer alike, had a more abysmal origin. Not rhetoric, but dogma, established on a base of adamant, this was the power on which

Jonathan relied, 'the word of the Lord and not of man whose breath is in his nostrils.' The saints that should take the Kingdom and possess it, who were they? Everyone that willed so to do? By no manner of means; but everyone that from eternity was called, and chosen, and sealed. In those tremendous hands he seemed to hold the universe, and as clay to fashion it, making, as it pleased him, vessels of honour and vessels of wrath, according to God's secret counsel. A counsel that had in its terrific heart some design, far beyond mercy, benevolence or human justice; but fixed and irresistible, reaching through ages upon ages, wide as the starry firmament, deep as hell. There was no gainsaying the will of the Almighty; and thus had He willed from the beginning. How then, and why, did they preach the Gospel to many nations? Was it that the nations might be saved? Never had the Lord chosen a people except only Israel—and lo, Israel was reprobate. How much less would he keep another people, civilised or barbarian, from falling into the pit? The nations could not be evangelised; it would be running on the sword of the spirit, which is two-edged, did they undertake a mission so ungodly. 'But yet,' he cried, clasping his hands, 'woe is me if I preach not the Gospel? And, therefore, the Gospel that we preach, what will it be? Will it not be unto the many a snare and a stumbling, a message having in it the savour of death; and unto the few, the little flock, the small company of Jacob, a savour of life and salvation? Thus is that question answered from of old—yea, it answers itself—which Gideon asked in the day of his return from battle, "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" To a vintage are ye going forth, and with a gleaning shall ye return.'

This tremendous doctrine of Election, languidly held or in secret disowned by many who were caught up in the whirlwind of the preacher's declamation, smote and buffeted them like a raging storm, flashed its lightnings upon their dazzled eyeballs, made their very hearts

quake with the illimitable fear of the unknown; and by his appeal to powers they could never vanquish, preter-human, from everlasting—powers of the Heavens which they had not scaled, so different, so unlike the tender, loving influences of hearth and home, of sowing and reaping, of the arts that give shelter to mankind—by thus mounting where the thunderbolts are forged, and flinging them abroad on heads bowed down in terror, the prophet subdued when he did not convince, and hearts trembled and were moved out of their place. Taking them defenceless, he went on now, in a train of logic, without remorse, haply without reason, although having the show thereof, in which the myriad lives of men were as the stones set in mosaic, each dipped in colour, dyed in flame, according as the artificer chose, but fixed within its pattern for ever. 'How glorious, how dreadful the great picture of God's judgment!' roared the voice of thunder, 'when at length it shall be displayed in our sight.' All pre-ordained, not a hair's breadth left to chance or man's caprice; the number counted, the sum sealed up; and all whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. 'Unto such as these,' concluded the amazing argument, 'go ye and preach to their condemnation.'

Then did the prophet, turning a scornful eye upon some that elsewhere had discussed with him, trample under foot the heresy of good works rampant this day in all the churches. It was the sign and proof of their apostasy. The churches of the Gentiles had become the Kingdom of Satan. Who were these that talked of reforming morals, sweetening man's daily toil, filling him with bread? Who that joined with the unbeliever in schemes of social improvement? that fell to serving tables, and cleansing streets, and advocating thrift, and refining the multitude with pictures, tales, excursions; with toys of science and tags of literature? There was a good old name for them, Epicureans—and a better, Atheists! Did they not know? Had they not heard? Surely the whole world lieth in wickedness, and will lie

therein to the end. Come now, reform such a world. Or let it alone—yea, rather, help it to destruction by preaching—and gather out of it the Saints that know their Redeemer.

Gerard was greatly moved. Not by the argument, which he suffered to pass on in its fiery chariot, nor by the vehemence and strength of Mr Jonathan's asseverations, delivered in tones which might have seemed a blast of the archangel's trumpet, nor even by the sinister beauty of his countenance and the high figure that he made; all this, at another time powerful to fix the artist's attention, was lost in a study of two faces quite close to him. There sat Marian, pale as her handkerchief, quivering with indignation, if he might infer what she felt from her steady look and dilated nostril. The argument had not made a convert in that quarter. But in his hand, which held Rosie's, he seemed to have the heart of a fluttering bird. It shook and shook again, and clung to him feverishly, and would not let him go. He looked down sideways at the child. Her eyes were closed; and from chin to forehead a colour, dismal as a winding sheet, overspread the delicately-carved features, now greyish-white in their tint, or ashy and purple in changing tones, pitiful to see. 'Mrs Harland,' he whispered, cursing the loud voice that rushed and roared between them, 'we must go. Get into the air; Rosie will faint.'

Rosie had fainted. Her sister came round, and there was a slight commotion about them. But the prophet, rising into a peroration which sent swift messengers to the ends of the earth, and magnified their office, as angels thrusting in their golden sickles and garnering God's harvest, made so huge a clamour, that under it they contrived to get away, little or nothing observed. The carriage was not far off; and Rosie, still in a dead faint, lay on the cushions. 'Best drive home instantly,' said Gerard; and they drove. It would have touched you to see the expression of boyish tenderness on Oberlin's face, where he sat, gazing fixedly at his motionless little friend, whose fair hair

came streaming on her sister's bosom. When they reached Fenimore Place, Harry went in with them. Marian and Gerard took up the girl in their arms, mounted the stairs, and laid her on her own bed. Hardly had they done so when she came to herself; but, in the same moment, a river of blood rushed from her lips and dyed the pillow. 'Merciful God?' exclaimed Marian, 'the child is dead! That fiend has killed her!'

'Not so,' said the musician, who kept his composure wonderfully in an hour like this; it was not the first he had witnessed. 'Rosie is alive; she breathes; water, please—hot or cold, no matter—and send for a physician.'

Marian rang the bell violently. Harry, outside the door, sick with apprehension, rushed in, and after him the servants.

'Go for Miss Raby; take the carriage,' cried Mrs Harland.

Harry was flying off, when Gerard took his hand to stop him. 'What shall you say to Miss Raby?' The lad looked inquiringly. 'Tell her Rosie has thrown up arterial blood,' continued Elven, leading him outside. 'It is a bad case, I fear.'

The minutes were hours; but, fortunately, on arriving at Hillside Terrace, Oberlin, whose frightened appearance told of some great trouble ere he opened his lips, found Miss Raby just in from a round of visits. She listened in silence, pressed his hand to give him courage—for he, too, seemed like fainting—and, after some preparation, entered the carriage. 'Drive like the wind,' cried Harry to the coachman. Like the wind they drove. Yet were they kept at one turning by a crowd of carriages; the service was over at St Barnabas, and people had come in a triumphal march down the road, their multitude and their eagerness bearing evidence to the power that had brought them thither and was now dispersing them on their missionary errand. Harry gnashed his teeth. He had caught Mrs Harland's outcry, and echoed it in his own spirit. Would the stream never pass? With some trouble the carriage

forded over its shallows and got to the other side. Then it raced along, Harry's heart racing with it, to a fearful sound, precursor of he knew not what calamity, but the horses' hoofs beat a funeral march, quick and sullen—the herald, not the mourner, of destruction. Would Rosie be living when they stopped at the door? He knew they would not let him see her now; and while Miss Raby went up to the child's bedroom, and into that cloud which might be hiding a corpse, the tender-hearted boy sat himself down on the stairs, to be as near as possible. His eyes were wet, in defiance of the resolution he had made to bear it like a man.

There was running to and fro; doors opened and shut; servants passed him on the stairs; that serene air, dedicated to quietness, was troubled. When the long interval brought on a sick despondency—for no one thought of Oberlin amid the hurry and panic—he saw Miss Harland coming by, and caught at her dress. 'Do tell me what has happened?' he said huskily, and now the tears ran down.

Letitia paused, and in her absent, earnest manner looking past him, as to some vision beyond, she answered out of her dream, 'My dear Harry,' said the eccentric being, 'how old are you?'

He fancied she was upset by the accident, so as to lose more than usual of her self-control. 'I am just turned sixteen,' he replied in astonishment.

'It is young, very young,' said Letitia, thoughtfully, 'but—Americans are precocious. Changeable, too. Harry,' she went on, 'you have a boy's devotion to Rosie. Could you make it a man's sincere, unalterable love?'

'Could I? Try me, Miss Harland, try me!' he flung out in a passionate exclamation; 'only try me!' He could say no more.

'You *will* be tried,' was her answer. 'I see there is in you the stuff of which heroes are made. Understand what is happening. Rosie has come round—'

He would not let her finish. 'Oh, thank God!' he cried, 'thank the good God!'

'Not Mr Jonathan's God, you mean by that cry. No, not his at all. Our God—yours and mine—the good God. But, Harry, this dear child is dying of terror—I cannot fully make out how it affects her mind; Miss Raby knows what harm it has done to her system, and will prescribe for it. Cure it she never will. Now comes your call to heroism—yes, heroism, in the shape of love. Make Rosie care about you—love you more than she dreads Mr Jonathan; teach her to forget him and his demon. You will, you say. It is not easy; may be impossible. And your heart—oh, Harry! it is beating, beating fast, you would tell me—your face tells me, flushed and burning. But if it were to break? If you lost Rosie after all? Too much—is it too much for a lad that means great things?—means to be a poet?—to write in his blood something that will live? Can you dare it? I forgive you if your heart says "No."'

'I can,' answered Harry. And the strange creature kissed him on the forehead and went silently away.

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE GOLDEN STAIRS

HERE was the play within a play, ancient in its motive as a tragedy of Æschylus, not credible to the modern ear, but desperately real, and in the strength of the characters opposed one to the other most unequal. A second time had Miss Raby heard a summons to Fenimore Place; and she had run thither, praying it might not be too late. For on that other occasion the banshee, or house-haunting spectre, in whom Harland recognised a woman he had once loved, had carried off his dead child and wrecked his marriage. On this new-coming the kindly physician thought some hope was allowable, and said so more resolutely than she felt, using her professional privilege of lessening the shadows. A careful examination did, at first, startle and sadden her. Why had no one been called in at Rylsford to see the girl? Had she ever thrown up blood previously? It appeared that she had, although not since arriving in London; but Mrs Greystoke made light of it, and the incident was forgotten. 'I must tell you, my dear Marian,' she said, at the conclusion, when she had laid Rosie to sleep again, 'heart and lungs are seriously affected; and I dare not advise travelling—the child could not bear it. She is very ill. Yet the worst illness may be that of the mind. Amuse her; don't let her see or hear Mr Jonathan. When she is able to move about, take her among good-natured friends; let her make some nice children's acquaintance. I fear she has had a shock.'

Miss Harland was present during this interview. 'The shock is palpable,' she observed. 'Rosie, without

being a subject for hysteria, has undergone such an iron discipline—a religious terror has taken hold of her. I know the symptoms. I suffered in my youth as she is suffering now, from the fangs of a merciless creed. You see me at times a cripple, and again almost well; it is the something behind the nerves, deeper, less material—spirit or shade, but not those white filaments you call nerves—that raises me up and casts me down. Have you the secret of a counter-influence to Mr Jonathan?' turning towards Miss Raby.

'Dry air, plenty of sunshine, human affection,' answered the Doctor thus put on her mettle. 'Tonics—no, I agree with you; the disease began in the brain.'

'It must be cured in the heart,' said Letitia, and, quitting the room, she had gone in search of Harry Oberlin, whom she found sitting outside on the stairs.

And so Doctor Cupid was called in, to coax with his sweet pipings the monstrous serpent forth, which lay curled up in Rosie's bosom. Cupid has not lost the fire-tipped arrows that his mother gave the boy for a birth-day gift long ago, and he knows how to send them flying to the mark. Yet, in a contest with elder gods, that have no human shape and grow mighty with our fears, was it possible he could win? With dauntless courage he put the bolt to the notch and sent it twanging melodiously through the summer air, Miss Harland—a creature less tameable than himself, slight and vehement—applauding. The shaft went home.

In other words, dismissing our too frequent metaphor, as the young girl rallied—which she did to Miss Raby's astonishment—that Arcadian scheme of heroic love began its work upon her. Harry knew that Mrs Harland wished him to be as much as possible in Fenimore Place, and, with a delightful shyness and a stoop of his curling locks, he would present himself there at all hours, to the neglect of books, masters and cricket matches. Had there been no dawning of this attachment previously, it could only have served as a well-meant masquerade and pretence of love-making now; but the lad and lass were not such

dutiful automata that they had waited for a signal from dark Mr Jonathan to think of one another. Oberlin, as became a dreaming boy, full of inarticulate poetry, and as romantic a youth as ever ran away to sea or listed without leave in the army, began this play when Rosie had no suspicion of it. But, in her troubled imagination, he was now one of the points of light—he and her sister and Elven, which made the gloom less intolerable. She learned to look for him every day; and every day he came.

Perhaps, to the physician's penetrating eye, it was but an Indian summer, and had no vital warmth—only a sky that smiled pleasantly, and a calm now the whirlwind was hushed, and amid the beautiful falling leaves a brave youth, supporting on his arm one who would not survive the first snows. 'I could order you and Rosie to those high valleys where you went before,' she told Marian, 'but my conviction is that, unless her mind gets relief, no Engadine will restore her. What is she thinking of when she sits and broods alone? Who will discover that for me? I cannot talk to her mother. We use different languages. Will she open her heart to the boy Harry? I doubt it.'

'There is Letitia,' said her friend, with a sigh, remembering old times when Rosie would sit and babble like a brook in her hearing. The days had put them asunder; not less affectionate, perhaps even more so, they lived their separate and solitary lives. Miss Harland, who took immense pleasure in having Rosie near at hand, was just stranger enough to win her confidence. She had a way of making everyone speak when she had been with them a short while. But her countenance fell after that melancholy talk, and her strength, which in things spiritual seemed so great, had all gone into heaviness. 'What is it?' inquired Marian, whose own eyes fell. They were in the library—a room she did not often enter, hung with sad memories. 'Have you such bad news?' she said again, seeing that Letitia did not reply.

'My news is very bad. I have got Rosie to speak;

but I am almost pledged not to speak again. Yet I will tell you. Oh, what an awful disease religion can be! Marian, the child opened to me at a certain page in the book she is always reading, when her eyes are not on the Bible. Do you recall, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, those allegorical sights at the house of the Interpreter?' Marian shrugged her shoulders; too well did she remember them. 'One is of a man shut up in an iron cage, crying that he cannot get out. Rosie is in that cage!'

Her sister-in-law was horror-stricken. 'Do you tell me that the child has lost her reason? Is out of her mind? What does she think, poor darling?'

'She thinks herself shut out of all the promises; that she had never any share in them.'

'Now, God in Heaven be gracious to us! Why?'

'Because she has no assurance of salvation. She cannot bring it home to herself that Jesus is her Saviour. She has never been converted, you know.'

'And for this she must die? For a horrible superstition bred of conceit and nourished on pride? Oh, Letitia, are you doing nothing to open her eyes?'

'What I can do I will do. But reflect on her bringing up. Father and mother insist on conversion, assurance, election—all your preacher hurled at your heads when Rosie fainted under his anathemas. Then they send this mere infant to be schooled by Mr Jonathan. And now she is crying continually, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me!" In the language they teach her, the trembling lips, white as my own, stammered once and again about "certain Judgment and fiery Indignation which shall devour me as an adversary?" What power have we against a poison running through all her veins?'

'We can take Rosie abroad. Harry shall go with us; change, movement, may do some good.'

'I have seen that tried to no purpose in similar delusions,' replied Letitia. 'However, let us consult Dr Raby.'

'Travel if Rosie can bear it,' was the answer. They

began their journey, reached Lucerne, and were compelled to bring the child home again. She simply could not endure foreign parts. She cried incessantly for England; so back they went to their London house, and in the autumn a sudden marvellous change came over her which amazed them all. Rosie put on an appearance of liveliness, wanted to be taken everywhere that Marian went, and asked her if it was not a real engagement between herself and Harry Oberlin. The feverish touch in all this could hardly be mistaken. But how if it implied that her dreadful fear was melting away in the glow of a more human emotion?

Her sister, taking the moist warm hands into her own, replied with a smile, 'Be yourself again, Rosie—the bright little angel we used to know—and Harry shall be your Prince, breaking through the enchanted briars to rescue his fair maiden. You are not old enough to be engaged. But he is your knight, your St George—what you will, quite ready to slay the dragon. He is very fond of you.'

'And I am fond of him,' said Rosie, with almost too bright a smile. 'When I get quite well you may tell him so. Not now; I must be quite well first.'

It is a sad story; one needs resolution to tell it to the end. Yet the Indian summer flung its silvery mist over the scene, which was changing, through all the tints of leaves and lengthening hours of dusk, to a winter cold and stern as Labrador. They were often at La Scala now. In a desperate case Marian sought to strange physicians; and when Gerard left them, as he did reluctantly, to give concerts at the Hague and in Berlin, the house which his bright and genial presence had lit up with a passing glint of sunshine took on the frown that had long, in Mrs Harland's thoughts, been familiar to it. She was a tender nurse while her dear child wanted nursing; sat up through the night by Rosie's bedside, and left her in the daytime only to snatch a troubled and dreaming sleep; or went with her to Miss Raby's when she became convalescent, and

in that cheerful abode spent an occasional evening, which acted as a tonic on both of them. For Miss Raby was the embodiment of a sound, unsophisticated temper, as healthy and clear as it was prompt and decisive. She made them better acquainted with the wonderful things of science, calming their fretfulness, and revealing to the younger mind of Rosie an aspect of the universe in which, if law prevailed, it was a law of harmonious development, of life tending upwards to beauty and perfection. The child drank eagerly at so pure a spring; it bathed her lips and her heart as in lightsome dew; but the dark hour came when Miss Raby's voice no longer sounded in her ears; she could not be new created. The monstrous serpent had dwelt inside her so many seasons that its lair was impregnable to the quiet wisdom that has cast out fear.

Could love succeed where science proved its goodwill, but had no lasting power? The hope led Marian up those golden stairs more frequently than she had ever thought of treading them. Even Mrs Latimer seemed less dangerous than the preacher who, with his glad tidings of election and assurance, had blanched Rosie's cheeks — a spectre that, stalking across the boards and now not visible, had left behind so deadly an influence. 'Letitia spoke the truth,' her sister-in-law would be apt again and again to murmur, as she went over the past and the present, with a helpless iteration of circumstances well known to the unhappy. 'It is as she said to Gerard, "the fifth act takes place in the unseen." What would I not give to know the course of that child's meditations, and to pluck the ghost of Mr Jonathan out of her brain! He is there—the vampire. Who shall exorcise him?'

And so, in their extremity, Pauline came to the rescue — an unexpected comforter. Rosie was still afraid of her, though not so shy as once upon a time; and, when the fit of high spirits—ominous to good Miss Raby, observant but helpless in so mysterious a malady—fell upon the girl's hitherto enchanted sadness, La Scala invited them to a round of rejoicings. Oberlin,

true to his name, was always devising some pleasant sight, touching the hours with a magic wand of poetry, music, masquerade, or some other new thing, light as gossamer, that would take his little maid's thoughts off herself and the great darkness in which her life was spent. Once or again they went out riding, softly and quietly; there was no cantering in the Park. You would say that she enjoyed it all; and so Harry believed; nor did Marian, who felt some pleasure in these diversions, fancy otherwise. But when, after a brilliant masking of children in the Japanese tea-house—at which Rosie laughed a good deal, while her attention had never seemed to flag—the boy said to her, 'Now you have been quite happy this evening —confess,' she looked at him as if to excuse herself, and answered timidly, in a low tone, 'I am never happy; I wish I were; then you would be happy too.' Poor boy, his heart sank.

I know not what the explanation may be, but almost always, when a dismal tragedy is going forward in this world, the comic interlude, outrageous and defiant, will insist on making its noisy laughter heard. The *gracioso*, or Jack Pudding, as we say in our ruder English, who set this on foot at La Scala, was Mr Browne Vandyke. His passion for the bizarre and the startling had induced him to tempt Pauline—herself as much given to flout and mock the children of Philistia as any literary decadent—to tempt her, I say, along the lines of a pretended reforming movement, the headquarters of which were now at Vivian Lodge. It was to be a species of female freemasonry, with ceremonies of initiation, a ritual worked out in sumptuous particulars, a code of rules, and a social aim. What sort of aim we may gather from a dialogue which took place between Harry and Rosie, who were lingering one afternoon, as they sometimes did, on the steps of the golden staircase, kept there by the beautiful wings and starry eyes of the angels, fixed in their enamel as in the jewelled walls of Heaven. Miss Harland, a little way

behind, unseen by them, had paused to let them talk in freedom.

'We mustn't go up any further,' said Oberlin, 'the Lodge is in session.' He smiled as if junketing over the extreme folly of grown-up persons.

'What Lodge?' inquired Rosie, sitting down on the stairs. She felt brighter than her custom was.

'Well, some call it one thing, some another. That oily man, Mr Vandyke—say you don't like him, Rosie; you don't much? that's right—he calls them "The Pathfinders!"'

'I thought the Pathfinders were Red Indians,' said Rosie.

'That's it. These are Red Indian squaws, on the war-path; no end of paint and feathers.'

'Whom are they going to fight in their war paint? Other women?'

'I daresay; but no, they want to emancipate—big word, isn't it?—to set women free, make them independent. Mr Harland said they had better call themselves "The Vivians," but Pauline—Auntie—flew into a regular passion at that. Now I call them "The Second Bests" or "Best Seconds."'

'Best Seconds? They will think it was the baker's boy that gave them a name smelling of the oven,' said Rosie. 'Why "Best Seconds?"'

'Because it's a rule of the Society that no one shall be an Adept—there's another big word for you!—unless she has had a second husband.'

Rosie looked up at Oberlin and laughed. 'What, everyone a widow? But—but then, how does Mrs Latimer belong to them?'

Oberlin made as if he were studying the blue firmament at the top of the stairs; then he shook his head. 'Not widows; they don't care the least bit about widows. Best Seconds! You try one husband—kind of sample, to see how you like 'em—if he doesn't suit, you just change him; send him back, try another. If he turns out a fraud no harm in trying a third—and so on till you get suited. There's the Pathfinders' platform—at least

their main plank. And they intend to keep on the war-path till it is good English and American law. I believe they're drafting a petition to Congress this afternoon. Listen to their talk; pretty lively for Red Indians, isn't it?'

'Oh, but Harry!' cried the girl, 'I am sure Marian hasn't joined them.' Her thoughts flew at once that way; some icy current flowing through their lives had chilled her since she came to live with the Harlands; but, too young for such difficult situations, it was impossible she should know their meaning. Was it this?

'Don't fret about your sister,' replied Oberlin. 'She is not upstairs; I saw her in the garden, talking to Uncle Charlie, before I came in. So, Rosie, you won't be a Pathfinder?'

'I think,' answered his little friend, gravely and decidedly, 'there ought to be no second marriages; none at all. If—supposing—' she stopped, and the rose kindled on her brow which was seldom to be seen there, and which, when it did come, lit up too intense a fire—'if I loved someone, and we were married—and he died, I would never—' They were exchanging very deep thoughts now—those brown eyes—and Oberlin did not require her to finish the sentence.

'How right that is!' he exclaimed, laughing as at some good news. 'And I wouldn't either. There couldn't be a second like the first; there ought not to be if there could.'

A long silence, broken, or perhaps intensified by the gusts of high talking and argument that blew down on them through closed doors. Rosie was lost in thought.

'You wouldn't marry a second time, Oberlin?' she said after a while.

'No—but I must have just the wife I wanted first,' looking earnestly down at the face, blown about with its yellow curls, and smiling archly. 'That I call fair—don't you?'

A singular expression, which did not escape Miss Harland, stole over the child's countenance.

'Yes, it is fair, I suppose,' she answered slowly, 'but if you were—engaged like—and the day, or the week, before the wedding, if she—if the Lord took her from you, Harry—would you promise never to think of anyone else—to wait—until you met her again?' The voice was exceedingly low and soft which made this strange request.

Harry glanced down — understood — and flushed violently. 'I must be sure she was fond of me,' he said in a hoarse tone. 'Make me sure of that—and I—'

Before he could finish—for he was shaking as in a fever, and the words died in his throat—Miss Harland ran up the stairs—ran, did not walk, much less creep in customary fashion. Her hand was on the boy's lips. 'Don't promise,' she said imperiously; 'you must not promise; you are too young to promise.' And turning to Rosie, while both fixed their eyes on the airy figure, which might have floated from the wall and come between them, 'My dear Rosie,' she continued, 'this boy is one of a thousand. He will never go back from his word. See him now, ready to bind himself whatever happens. Isn't he a noble heart? And what are you asking? Do you wish to be a creature, unseen of others, always seen by him, wherever he goes, however long he lives, feeding on his life? These promises ought never to be made—they bind the living to the dead. You see it now, don't you, Rosie?'

'But I *will* promise if she wants me to,' cried Oberlin, 'I will—what do I care?'

'No, Harry, I was wrong, forgive me,' said the child between her sobs, which took violent hold of her, almost to fainting. But resolution fought the paroxysm down. 'Miss Harland, I *am* glad you came,' she said at length, taking the lady's fingers and kissing them. 'To-night, as I lie awake—I can't sleep at nights; Marian calls me her nightingale—I should perhaps see it all, when it was too late. And I should die the sooner. You know, Harry dear, I am dying. Don't cry like that, you bad boy,' she said tenderly. 'It is time I died, when I get

so selfish. Oh, don't cry, Harry. Let us find Marian and go home. You come, too.' And she put her other hand in his.

After this day—as though it had been the height of some secret hope to which Rosie looked forward, and from which her passage must ever be down to the hollow vale—her spirits drooped no less visibly than for a brief space they had mounted. The eyes, too, shining bright, filled sometimes with tears, and then Marian could bear to look upon them; but their usual expression was one of extreme terror, so much the more pathetic that by every means the child aimed at concealment of her state, lest it should give those about her pain. Occasionally, the awful plague-rose which marks consumption in its later stages burned amid a waxen pallor upon the wasted cheek; yet, as her best of doctors bore witness, the complaint of which she was dying could scarcely be identified; if it had some of the effects of decline, it appeared, in other ways, to partake of a mental character, and was subject to fluctuations caused by oppressive thoughts, and dependent upon obscure processes within the mind itself. Dr Oldmayne, summoned afresh, gave it as his opinion that, were the physical health to grow stronger, the mind would probably break down. Stripping his highly-involved language of its wrappings, what he said came to this—that the constitution, originally sound, was now impaired as a consequence of religious despondency—a form of mental disease seldom or never cured, but capable of alleviation by time, care, and the action of the understanding, if it could be stimulated to healthy secular exercise. In such a verdict, coming when it did, there was little encouragement. But the accomplished practitioner had no more to say.

Mrs Greystoke was installed under the same roof with her daughters now, and would gladly have waited on her darling day and night. To her intense grief, Rosie always grew worse after she had been a little while in the room—so much so, indeed, that Miss Raby

—compelled to choose between losing her patient and hurting the unhappy mother—could only suggest, as she gave the stern command, that a spirit in disorder seems to hate those whom it loves most. Nevertheless, from Mrs Greystoke proceeded the daring counsel that, since doctors had come to their wits' end, healing should be sought in an attempt at conversion, which Mr Jonathan professed himself ready to undertake. Nothing would persuade the good woman that Rosie was not going through a spiritual crisis, the outcome of which would be renewed health and a peaceful assurance of God's favour. She had an inexhaustible store of texts on this head. But they would never have convinced Marian, who was sure that Mr Jonathan's appearance at her bedside would terrify the child into an agony. Letitia considered within herself how this might be; she had given up hoping in physicians, whom at no time had she greatly trusted in; and, 'I do not think,' she observed to Marian, 'that our darling can be saved by medicine; if any chance remains, it will be by taking her spiritually onward along the path she has travelled. Call in Mr Jonathan; let me be in the room while he is there. I will see that he does Rosie no harm.'

'I will not be present if he comes,' answered Marian; 'we should quarrel openly. What to do I don't know. I would as soon call in a witch-doctor. Decide—I dare not.'

Miss Harland sent for the preacher. He arrived an hour before sunset, on one of those rare October evenings when the sky is tranquillity itself, the leaves falling at intervals like drops of a slow golden rain, and the clouds are dispersed quietly over the heavens, from zenith to nadir, in crimson flecks, tawny upon the edges, and showing between them long, thin rivulets, as it were, of a misty paleness. No wind was abroad; and the noises of the streets came faintly where Miss Harland sat close to the window by Rosie's chair, in which the dying girl rested, wearing some loose garment, vapoury and white. In the drawing-room Mrs Greystoke detained her clergyman for a moment.

'How is your daughter this evening?' he asked in his deep tones, not unfeelingly.

Tears gushed from her eyes, while she answered in the allegorical manner which was a second nature to both of them, 'She is on the brink of Jordan. But, oh, my kind friend, you will do this great work which is in your hand; save a perishing soul, and draw her out of the flood.'

It was a natural thing to say at that hour, yet in the words Mr Jonathan detected some hidden savour of carnal doctrine, and he replied, almost angrily, 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive? How know we that I am not even as Ahijah the prophet, sent to thee with heavy tidings? For here has been manifold grace and warning given, and the soul refuseth to live.'

Quite beaten down, the afflicted mother could but reply, 'Go up now, and deliver the message of salvation.'

And with a ponderous step he ascended. The door opened before he could knock. Miss Harland was inside awaiting him. 'I have prepared Rosie,' she said in her quiet way; 'the child is ready to listen. But the doctor limits the longest visit to a quarter of an hour. You will please do your errand quickly.'

At another time the mighty voice of Mr Jonathan would have replied to this intimation like a discharge of cannon; he was not, however, so cyclopean as not to perceive the child's weariness and her utter fragility; wherefore, answering not at all, he came near, and took her hand into his immense fist. It gave no pressure, no sign that he was welcome. 'Shall I read to you some comfortable words?' he asked, modulating his tone to a gentle key. 'Have you any favourite psalm or chapter in the Holy Book?'

Rosie gazed at him languidly. 'Read, "The Lord is my Shepherd," please,' she answered, as if rousing from sleep.

He was much gratified. 'An excellent choice,' he said, and turned to the words, which in his mouth became a changing melody, a recitative quite simple and touching at first, then a deep-toned andante, solemn, almost sublime, as he chanted, 'Yea, though I walk through

the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me,' and, at last, a cry of jubilation, bright and shining, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.' When he ceased, the air seemed still to vibrate, as if a strain had been playing somewhere at hand on the violin. He was observing the child's face meanwhile very closely. 'Do you feel the consolation of those blessed assurances?' he said at length, seeing that she did not stir. 'Do you believe that Jesus is your Shepherd? Have you appropriated these mercies of which David speaks?'

Rosie looked up into the dark countenance bending over her. 'I should like Him to make me lie down in green pastures—I am so tired—but I keep on looking at the picture, and it is not for me.'

'And why not?' said Mr Jonathan, softly, putting a constraint on himself. 'Do you not love Jesus?' When he asked this question, a delicate flush rose to the pallid cheek.

'I have always loved Him,' she said, flushing yet more. 'I gave myself to Him long ago. But you say—and mother said it over and over again, till it is burnt into my heart—I must be sure He has accepted my love. I don't know that. Who is to tell me?'

'I tell you,' said Mr Jonathan, rising up and speaking loudly. 'I have come to bring you the good news. Believe it and you are saved.'

Rosie was exceedingly quiet under this adjuration. Then she shook her head mournfully. 'I don't see how you are to know about me,' she said, as if all that were a thing she had gone over in her mind, as doubtless she had, while emulating the nightingale in her sleepless watches; 'you don't know who is chosen or who is shut out. And I don't know. Nobody knows. The Lord is the Shepherd of the chosen. If I were one of them, you say, I should see it clear, don't you? But I never have seen it.'

All his short, sharp, incisive exhortations were blunted and broken on this acknowledged ignorance.

It was a strange dialogue, carried on in whispers, now and then rising to passionate entreaty on Mr Jonathan's part, as he stood, or knelt, or walked about, while Letitia, watch in hand, as at an operation, counted the minutes. 'One moment more,' he begged, wiping his forehead, on which the beads of perspiration stood out.

'Not a moment,' said Letitia, firmly, and she touched Rosie on the shoulder. 'Tell me, my dear,' she went on, 'you are sure that you love God?'

Her little friend smiled sadly. 'That's not the question. Does He love me? He knows I love Him.'

'Well, then, can you give yourself up into His hands, whatever He does with you? Lost or saved, do you wish it were all true about the Good Shepherd?'

'I have been watching those red clouds ever so long,' murmured Rosie to herself; 'they are fading now; by-and-by it will be dark. And I shall go into the dark.' Her thoughts, deep as death, seemed like an abyss into which the hearers plunged, fathomless, immeasurable. Neither had a word in their mouths. 'I shall go,' the child reiterated, without any appearance of alarm while she spoke, 'before to-morrow dawns. Miss Harland, at seven o'clock they will be laying me out.' Her eyes closed, and the head, falling a little on one side, scattered its bright curls over the vapoury films of her dress.

'She is wandering,' said Letitia. 'You have done your office, Mr Jonathan. *I* believe the child is safe in the everlasting arms. And you?'

He was gloomily silent. 'Now you must go,' said the lady; 'we have taxed her strength over much I fear.' Mr Jonathan stood irresolute for an instant, searched Rosie's expression again, as probing it to the quick, took up his Bible, and left the room.

When his foot was outside on the pavement, Rosie sat up from her deep sleep. 'I am quite resigned,' were the first words she uttered. 'God may do with me as He likes. If He doesn't love me, I love Him. Miss Harland,' to the dear friend who was weeping at her chair, 'give Harry this message from me—the last, the

very last I can ever send him—say I forbid him to make that promise—he is not to make it. And—when he cares for someone else—don't let him forget poor little Rosie. You can give Harry one of these curls to-morrow; after—you know. Oh, how glad I am to die!'

The blood was flowing from her mouth, staining the white garment. An hour followed, such as those have to endure who see their dearest cut down in the bloom of their youth—an hour not to be described. When it was past, the bitterness of death went with it. There was a time of peace, while Marian and Mrs Greystoke sat in silence, watching the moonlight as it filled the sky, and spread out as a stream, and took the night with a voiceless flood—then shrank between its shores of ether, and slipped away, and the dark hour before dawn fell upon them. Lights, subdued until then by that high brilliancy, now came out in the sick chamber, but still soft, as fearing to hurt the closed eyelids of the child. Miss Harland, awaking from a brief slumber, was with them. And as the grey eye of dawn looked in tenderly, full of a divine compassion, Rosie moved upon her pillow. She sat up, and putting her arms about Marian, remained thus, without voice or any other motion, while the ticking of the clock measured out sixty or eighty seconds. Then her eyes opened, but there was no vision of this world in them; and with a long breath, as of an infant falling asleep, she passed.

'Into the light,' said Letitia, softly to herself, closing the brown eyes for ever. But Mrs Greystoke and Marian fell into one another's arms. 'Oh, mother,' said Marian, quite beside herself, as though compelled to cry out, 'this—this is your doing.' And they clung to each other the more passionately even for that word.

It was Harry Oberlin's way to spend the morning with his tutor, and, as soon as he had got rid of his lessons, into which nevertheless he threw his whole heart to keep down the trouble always mounting there, he

would ride or walk to Fenimore Place, and inquire about Rosie's condition, going up to sit by her side for a while if she were well enough. That morning was a glorious one, with wide lights and a peculiar freshness in the air. It is impossible at sixteen to feel the settled sadness which broods over the spirit long used to this melancholy world; and Harry, tasting the pleasure distilled by so gracious an atmosphere, put from off him the cloak of sorrow, as one pushes mechanically aside a garment that feels too heavy when the sun is warm. In his fervent veins hope coursed along; how on a day shining like this, even in the decline of autumn, was he to believe that the cloud of sickness would not scatter, but deepen into death on the instant? No message had been conveyed to La Scala; Miss Harland shrank from writing; and, easy as it was to send, the prostration which came upon them all made it seem natural that they should put off the desolate news an hour or two, so that Harry, on ringing and being admitted, was asking in his quick, shy fashion whether he might go up to Mrs Harland, when the grave looks of the butler stopped his speech. Something was wrong; there must have been a change for the worse. He was taken silently upstairs, and, on the threshold of the room in which Rosie had spent her last hours, Marian stood, the door closed behind her, awaiting him. Every particle of colour had gone from her face; with long watching, and now with weeping, her eyes were swollen; she could not summon up courage to utter the word which would have told Harry of his loss. But a sudden cloud came upon him as she grasped his hand; no word was wanted; he knew—and a sickly tremor passed over the lad's frame, as if the ground were failing him. Then Marian unclosed the door, and they went in together.

The light was not less cheerful than outside. A great breadth of heaven, visible at the window, seemed to ask that the whole room should be thrown open, and the sky itself descend as a canopy over the bed on which lay—what was it that lay there? Harry saw the death-chamber in a single glance, taking in its beauti-

ful quiet, as in some chapel, where a saint's body is resting. There were lights at the head and the feet; red roses on a table, where other lights burnt and threw up the rich glow of the flowers; and on a crimson velvet pall the child slept, her hands by her side, her long curls smoothed on the pillow. Marian stood by, without a word; and Harry looked and looked—how sadly, how piercingly!—upon the features, now not pale or terror-stricken, but almost, he could have fancied, warm with a flush of satisfied desire. As is often the case, the lips were slightly parted in a smile which seemed at once familiar and far-off. He could not think that Rosie was dead. If he spoke, would not the eyes unclose and smile with the parted lips?

'Her last message to you Letitia will give,' said Marian, in an undertone, 'but she said you were to have one of her curls—to-day; she said to-day.'

And taking up a pair of scissors from the table, she passed them through the golden hair. As she did so, the sharp click of the steel made Oberlin shudder. He took the long yellow skein of floss-silk—such did it appear to him then—and held it convulsively. What was he staying for? That sound of the shears, dividing from Rosie's head the curl she had bequeathed to him, was a more dreadful sign of parting than he could bear. Still he looked long, and with aching eyes, on the face set out its crimson pillow. Then, for the first and last time, Harry Oberlin bent down, and with his own lips touched the lips of the dead. They were cold; he felt the chill at his heart. He turned quickly, lost his balance, and fainted in Marian's arms. She held him there, where before the child had breathed her last; and as soon as she was able, with a mother's compassion, she rested his head gently on the pillow beside Rosie's, till she could call for assistance. Miss Harland came in at the summons, and saw another pale face on the crimson coverlet. She smiled in her enigmatic way, seeing Harry as one dead, grasping to his heart the golden curl.

'He must live—like the rest of us,' she said, between complaint and resignation, while she helped Marian to seat him in the chair which Rosie had occupied near the window that last evening.

'But he is young; he will remember it all as a dream of his youth,' replied her sister, as she bathed his eyes and forehead, and he began to revive.

'And are *you* so old, Marian?' asked Letitia, rebukingly. She had an uneasy presentiment, that here was a decisive moment in their lives, and that Harry was the least to be pitied.

'*There* is my youth,' returned Marian, pointing to the angel in snowy raiment, laid out on the pall, that seemed a scarlet cloud on which she might be taken up to Heaven.

Then they led Harry from the chamber of death between them. Once he looked back, and the parted lips were smiling, familiar and far-off, unmoved. He would never touch them with his own again. But round his fingers twined the curl of golden floss; and Rosie's last words came nestling to his bosom while Letitia gave them, almost in as tender an accent as that in which they had been uttered. They were now a part of himself; and this, he knew, was his wedding day. He would wait until they two met once more for the bridal morn.

And so Harry Oberlin goes out of the story.

CHAPTER XX

DEAD SOULS

It is the month of September, In the year following these events, and we are at Wynflete Abbey with our company of actors again. Wynflete, though as far removed, in popular imagination, from the highways of business or pleasure, as Tadmor in the wilderness, shoots up into the sky like a brilliant piece of fireworks, and is beheld of all eyes. It has a place in daily telegrams, and bulletins are despatched from its gates, beyond which no reporter can penetrate, as though it were a Royal Court, and its inhabitants worthy to have their most trifling actions spied upon, their breakfast cups photographed, and themselves transferred, by scientific process, to the front pages of all the illustrated magazines in the two hemispheres. Wynflete Town is choking with sightseers, who will not be suffered to set eyes on the inside of the show; but if they see the horses' heels and hear them kicking, it will be happiness. The entrance to the Abbey, unlike that of Heaven, is crowded at all hours; but a vigilant police keep it free from intruders, who would fain get admittance on every sort of pretext; and, beginning at that charmed spot, and widening as it spreads, there is a ripple of excitement, diffused through the intersecting circles of fashion, art, literature and finance, which leaves only those untroubled who are too poor—a sadly common quality—or else too philosophical—and how many are these, pray? —to hope for some kind of profit from '*The Descent of Istar*'?

The Goddess is certainly pledged to make that

descent at Wynflete Abbey, in the old chapter house of the monks. Who is the cloud-compelling deity that has arranged this avatar, so little to be expected, on the shores of the Northern Sea? Men reply, 'Lord Wootton of Wynflete,' a stately old Zeus, long reigning on Ida—whom no goddess hitherto has resisted. But even the Olympians send out lying dreams at moments of a critical uncertainty; and such as are well versed in Mr Harland's meek virtues — among them a retiring disposition is not the least—have shrewdly suspected that he means to make a good thing of the Assyrian drama, while paying due religious homage to the susceptibilities of his Missionary stockholders. Yet, in the forecasts of every hue now littering so many journals, Mr Harland's name does not appear. He has long since bid farewell to the side scenes, the green rooms, the full-dress rehearsals, where in ancient days no man was more frequent a visitor. The shadow of Mr Jonathan pursues him; and if, under cloud of night, when shadows themselves are merged in the general darkness, he slips away to any Blocksberg, Walpurgis meeting, or masquerade of the ungodly, that secret is divulged to none but his sworn associates. However, he is Lord Wootton's guest, and his wife accompanies him; nor can he be indifferent to the grace and favour of a City magnate now in the very first rank such as Mr Charles Latimer, who may have some interest here, as it would seem he has conquered the like in most other profit-yielding concerns on a large scale, and who has brought Mrs Latimer down with him, and her aesthetic director and father confessor in things of beauty, Mr Browne Vandyke.

The crowds come and go about the Abbey gates; newspapers fill their columns with many-coloured smoke of rumour, mostly false; but only the members of the orchestra, the mechanicians, and the minor actors, lodging down in the quaint old streets and the red-tiled, half-timber houses on both sides of the harbour can see, as they pass in and out, what unparalleled splendours are preparing within the closed circle. Lord Wootton

has comparatively few guests under his roof; all, in some way, form part of '*The Descent.*' Gerard Elven has been with him for several months; the Harlands, but lately arrived, may stay as long as the musician. It is a strangely contrasted and unusual gathering—incessant practice, day and night, in front of the stage; but perhaps as much, though more silent, behind the scenes and withdrawn from observation. The most interesting play is often by-play. And among the fascinations, not to say the perils of theatrical life, is that marvellous intermingling of the real with the fantastic, which, working on a heated brain, or heightening sentiment until it becomes illusion, produces at last an entire oblivion of the cool, calm daylight, and turns acting itself to passion and tragedy.

Marian Harland is under the spell of that illusion. In our mad world—concerning which the great satirists have feared lest it should turn out to be *les petites maisons de l'univers*, a Bedlam or Charenton set aside for moon-struck celestials, incorrigible on another planet—dreams govern men's conduct; and if men's, how much more certainly women's? We like to give them effective names that shall disguise their flimsy substance, and thus it is customary to talk of ambitions, loves, ideals—'the moon-shine's watery beams'—whereas, in sober truth, a little appetite and a deal of fancy compel us to that table at which we devour things not good for digestion. I liken the fancies which hitherto had ruled Marian Grey-stoke's choices—her acceptance of Harland, and what followed that—to a trim pleasure boat on some soft-gliding stream; there she sits, enjoying at first the pass-ing landscape, the breeze that comes sweet-smelling from flower-sprinkled meadows, the undulation which swings and sways the little craft in musical motions, while a long trail of snow upon the water tells how fast they are sailing. Then, before she can prepare against the shock, there is a mighty change. Out of the dark and dread-ful mountains, piled up skyward, that emerge all at once on their course, torrents descend, white with anger as with headlong speed, the huge tornado howls, the gentle

river is a sea, full of rocks, boiling over in surges, boundless and cloud-capped, on whose roaring waves other boats, as frail and unprotected, toss and leap and dance, in a commotion so violent that the crash of their wounded sides is swallowed up in more amazing thunders, and some are splintered to atoms, others go down head-foremost like diving birds, in a storm which will not pause for one poor moment. That sea is alive with wrecked pleasure boats; yet those which are not sunk display their wanton sails, and fly along with a loud sound of instruments on board, as gay as they ever were upon the inland stream. Their crews, indeed, suppose the whole spectacle a *coup de théâtre*—a play got up for their diversion, from which, if the horrible were missing, their enjoyment would be less. Everyone is mad but themselves; and their dreams are the sole realities.

The lady's account of herself, at this time, would not be altogether the same as mine. She felt, although not capable of putting it into so Euripidean a setting, what another woman has finely expressed—her heart was a funeral urn, full of ashes, and she could have cried out,—

> 'Behold and see
> What a great heap of grief lay hid in me.'

When her sister died, Marian saw in vision that dead infant, with a rose on its breast, to which we have likened the brief melancholy action, in which Fate was the protagonist, draping its grim visage in a religious veil. With one violent sweep, all her inherited beliefs—significant phrase—vanished, and were seen no more. From the grey hour during which Rosie clung about her neck, murdered by Mr Jonathan's Gospel, she looked upon religion as the primitive peoples look upon it who hate and fear their gods, and pass the sacred grove warily, dreading a flash from unpitying eyes, not human, which tears cannot wet or tenderness soften. The power that killed Rosie was henceforth to be reckoned with, as we take into our list of possibilities the awful accidents of which we read, but against which personally we can

make no provision. In spite of them, we go our long railway journey, buy our ticket for the play, commit ourselves to Ocean liners, forget to ask how many doors open out of a crowded church, and laugh and put our hand to lotteries at bazaars, in buildings not by any means fireproof. Extreme fear and utter recklessness have much in common. How propitiate the malignant power? By submission? By love? The dead child was full of love and submission; but she had wasted away before its presence.

And with a heart full of ashes, a red sparkle among them, Marian rose to act out her weary days. She and Lucas were no longer husband and wife except in name. If, at this stage in their travelling, he could have shown the sympathy which, a couple of years before would have stirred in him, who knows but they might have now contracted the marriage of true minds? But something more was needed for the transmutation of Lucas Harland. His heart, fretted on the surface when he saw the young girl wrapped in her crimson shroud, did not take long to heal. In a campaign we march forward, whoever falls out of the ranks. Harland was fighting a succession of battles, with incessant demands on eye, hand, brain and will. But when office hours were done, and the pavement cleared, and he could only think of to-morrow, not telephone, or telegraph, or dictate to his clerks, or dialogise in secret corners with his confederates, he was not likely to spend a dull evening at home trying to comfort his intractable Marian—this Constance who refused all comfort, and sat and moaned. La Scala gave him the only refreshment of which his system was capable; it served the purpose of an *opéra bouffe*, or a superior and exquisitely fitted Music Hall, with just the amount of excitement he could bear. And you might search in vain among the lighter *artistes*, men or women, for one who was so endlessly amusing, so brilliant, mischievous, arch and disengaged as Pauline Latimer, formerly Mrs Hendrik Henshaw.

Marian did not sit at home and mope for long. Her sensitive nature showed itself in ways that are only per-

plexing because they appear to be inconsistent, as when a patient lies first on the right side and then on the left, hoping to get some change in his torture. The trappings of woe which it was forbidden her not to put on roused her scorn, as if they advertised something too sacred for the perusal of passers-by. That she could not bear the most distant reference to her trouble was well understood; and Miss Harland closed and locked the room in which Rosie died, taking the key, but not venturing to say what she had done. Mrs Greystoke, terrified into silence, went home that she might weep more freely. And our brave American lad, Harry, was with his own people on the other side of the Atlantic, bearing, like Marian, a grief in his heart of which he would never speak again. Pity that he went, for he was the one wholesome influence at La Scala; and to La Scala Mrs Harland, after the first months of seclusion, was often resorting.

She went thither, not in jealousy, not much minding how Lucas behaved, or what was the secret purpose of a game in which Pauline, who could not possibly care about him in comparison with Charlie, was acting, at best or worst, the part of Lady Macbeth. But as men in their disappointments take to drink, or gambling, or horse-racing, or other vices, which they practise with a sour sense of contempt for themselves and the thing they are doing, so Marian, resolved to preserve the house in which Rosie died from contamination, rushed abroad in the hope of forgetfulness. And Vivian Lodge stood open like a booth at a fair. It had its painted canvas, with all manner of wild and curious beasts depicted thereon, under the skilful direction of Mr B. Vandyke; its dancing-girls in skirts and bangles, playing the tambourine or shaking their lively castanets, while they twirled and twisted to the sound of a fiddle or two, which were kept going pretty constantly; its jugglers, fire-eaters, serpent charmers, pullers of the long bow from foreign parts and countries oversea, with a sprinkling of the slightly insane, who gave this banquet an extraordinary zest and flavour. Since to nearly all who frequented Mrs Lati-

mer's at this period we might apply the saying of Dean Swift, in his 'digression concerning the original, the use and improvement of madness in a commonwealth,' viz., that they were 'persons whose natural reason had admitted great revolutions from their diet, their education, the prevalency of some certain temper, together with the particular influence of air and climate.' For, as he goes on to observe, 'what man in the natural state or course of thinking did ever conceive it in his power to reduce the notions of all mankind exactly to the same length, and breadth, and height of his own? Yet this is the first humble and civil design of all innovators in the empire of reason.'

Innovators, male and female, of every age above youth; the feminine reformers generally of those years wherein, if we may believe the French philosopher, a woman would burn herself sooner than the love letters of which she has chanced to be the recipient. Not all mad, like Hamlet, north-north-west, but ever at some point of the compass, which, once it had taken this ply, did not vary for all the laws of magnetism. We need hardly, perhaps, yield our faith to the legend which Harry Oberlin recited, touching the conditions of membership among the Path-finders and the 'Best Seconds.' Yet they gave some colour to it by their persistent outcry against the institution of marriage, as it has been handed down from the period of ignorance to our own time. What they proposed to substitute, although doubtless known to themselves, was not suffered to escape into the ears of the uninitiated. Some, as, for instance, Miss Vane Vere, the well-known professor of Rational Dress and Dancing, spoke of 'terminable annuities,' by which it is suspected that they meant engagements lasting for a year and a day, but then to be dissolved at the pleasure—or, more likely, the displeasure—of either contracting party. Others—and among these Mrs Oneida Leyden was far the most advanced—talked of 'perfection'—a thing not easy of attainment in this motley world—but, on making cautious inquiries, Marian was told that to be perfect we must rise above law and follow instinct, as

the animals do which we absurdly suppose inferior to ourselves; whereas the exact correspondence in them of reaction to stimulus puts to shame our wavering conduct, founded as it is on mere reasoning. Thus to be perfect and to be married—at least always to the same partner—did not seem in accordance with the Higher Law. Mrs Leyden was thought to have obeyed the Higher Law. Into this remarkable scheme a lady from the Turkish frontier, speaking many languages, and known by her eloquent books on the subject of woman's freedom, had brought fresh complications by recommending the Oriental household as a pattern for progressive people. But as this very Frau von Engelmacher had boldly announced that superfluous babies should be handed over to the chemist, and was known to take a strong view in favour of vivisection, the Pathfinders expressed their relief in a formal document when her visit at La Scala came to an end. Pauline shuddered along with them; she liked novelty, and would sell her bracelets for amusement, but in laudanum as a social panacea her faith was not robust; and, to do her justice, she adored children, and was sorry she had none of her own to pet and spoil.

These, with their favourite insanities, if they diverted Marian from her sadness by the extravagance which appeared in their dress and language, would speedily have driven her home to thoughts more melancholy than she brought with her. They shattered the world to pieces, and with the rotten timber proposed to kindle a blaze. She was not in want of a theory, but of some object for which to go on living; while to the Vane Veres, the Leydens and the Engelmachers such an object was the system each of them had wedded—and the union in their case would not soon be terminable. But, in the chambers of imagery at La Scala, she met others more interesting, and, it must be owned more dangerous—women who had no theory, yet had gone beyond the permitted experience in search of a happiness they did not always find. This was her peril, that the old, dusty, dead and gone reading of her youth, up in the forlorn garret, among the volumes of Saint

Simon, here came to life, and was acted out before her eyes. Not, it will be readily understood, as if Mrs Latimer threw open her drawing-room to persons that wore on their bosom the scarlet letter; or to such as in the best society were taboo any more than she happened to be herself. She could always, in spite of the religious press, claim what we may designate as brevet rank among matrons; yet, as there were houses into which not all Charlie Latimer's wealth, nor even his chivalrous attachment to her, would gain her admission, this thin red line, inviolable and distinct, set her in a world which had its own freedom. As Gerard Elven whispered, 'Put a light at your window, the moths will fly to it.' These came fluttering round—they often had bright eyes and wings of an exquisite texture; some could hint their story in a way to draw tears. But whether the women laughed or cried—and quite apart from the abstruse question as to which was in the wrong, all were alike so far as this, that if Saint Simon were back again on our side of the screen, and wanted to continue his thirty huge volumes, he might go on writing with the same quill; his ink would be as black as ever. The world was true to itself; London could show a secret record in comparison with which the chronicles of the Louises and the Regency need not blush; piece out this fragment with that; allow the accused to make their own apology; finish the half phrases; picture the algebra to which they had reduced what would not bear telling in plain language;—and there was the sardonic old French historian, with his frown and his sneer, at your elbow, having exchanged his silks and velvets for our colourless nondescript, but in his witness absolutely the same. 'And this,' said Marian to herself a thousand times, 'this is the world. I know it now.'

It was natural that the law of contrast should act here, on a temperament so well fitted to observe it; that, as her mind grew dark, a figure which appeared in her eyes great and even heroic should come forth as in the strong Rembrandt light, on the edge of gloom. Marian did not pass one single day, after her bereave-

ment, without musing on the life, the character of Gerard Elven. She had never known a man to compare with him ; for if genius be not so uncommon as we despairingly say, how seldom does a seed of it spring up into blossom and fruit like this? Yet he was no favourite of fortune. His long and bitter struggles had written themselves deep in a countenance which, seen at rest, was lined with cares, borne in solitude, and unrelieved during months and years of silent suffering. When he began to speak the lines changed ; if he laughed—and he was much of the laughing sect, and had a keen sense of humour, which he did not forget to sharpen at his own expense—then a most deceptive cheerfulness overspread his face, rippling it into sunshine, beneath which these furrows turned to the mere wrinkles of the comedian who breaks out into jokes in his dreams. Gerard was thought to be exceedingly good company by those that met him outside his tent and could not lift the curtain. Which of his plays had been acted more frequently than '*Eulenspiegel*,' the wonderful comic extravaganza, the '*Midsummer Night's Dream*,' of a fancy rich in ludicrous yet genial situations, so mirth-moving, droll and pathetic that, if a man had the ear of such melodies, he would have said at once its sources were too deep to be fathomed by laughter? It should have been called '*Elvenspiegel*,' snarled his German reviewers, intending an empty piece of wit, and shooting nearer the mark than they supposed. He was an '*Eulenspiegel*'—an owl-glass that pleasantly distorted his own face, taking a humorous revenge on Fortune, and laughing back at the ancient dame, his stepmother, who treated all her swans as geese.

At starting, how small an outfit does the son of genius take with him? Gerard came of a long line of precentors, organists and schoolmasters—so much he could boast. The feeling of art and culture as something in itself honourable, and the true sense of breeding, though not reckoned in genealogies, were not to be despised ; and he had them ; but others had them too,

and died and made no sign. His biographers, of whom, with a certain misgiving, Marian read every page, gloried in the artist as a self-made man. They told of his poverty in youth; his first attempts to write and compose when he knew scarcely the elements of music; his appalling failures and flights from city to city, the theatres of which appeared to fall bankrupt as soon as they had accepted a work of the young *maestro;* his projected voyage to Constantinople and wreck on one of the 'shining Cyclades,' where he sketched '*Istar*' from an old marble fragment, picked up among the rocks, and sculptured by some unknown hand, perhaps two thousand years ago; his miserable sojourn at Vienna, which had almost proved the end of the story, when he was reduced to copying out music for the military bands, but could not get employment enough to pay the baker, and lay in a garret starving, while his wife, a simple, affectionate creature, tended him as well as she was able, caught a fever at his bedside, and was in her grave when he stood up on his feet again to face the indifferent world.

Ah, that young wife? What was she like? Not a woman of any talent—an understudy of second personages on the stage, pretty in her mild German fashion, a sort of Gretchen, but without Gretchen's sad history; who followed her husband in his wanderings, shared the troubles into which he fell by his obstinate and perverse originality, and did not live to see him crowned with laurel by those that, if public opinion had suffered them, would willingly have beaten him with rods. He had married her at nineteen, like Shakespeare; but no children came to them; and now, after seven-and-twenty years, it was not to be imagined that her memory could fill his heart. The first choice of famous artists—what chapter in romance can equal the delusions, griefs and repentances in which that abounds? They are victims of the enchantment that makes all things new to them; their herb of grace, at the golden hour when they set forth on their travels, is surely 'Love-in-idleness.'

He had fought, also, this Von Troneg Hagen, not with his fiddle-bow, but with a rifle at his shoulder, in the Seven Weeks' War of 1866, leaving orchestras and operas to march under the red-and-black banner against the Austrians, and getting wounded at Sadowa seriously enough to lay him up in hospital for three months. There was a time when he would have liked well to add the gold stripe to that flag of blood and iron; Gerard, in his youth, had been a Republican—nay, as a lad of twelve, he was said to have distributed seditious pamphlets among the soldiery of his native town; but when Prussia took up the cause of the Fatherland, Elven wiped out old scores, and the regiments marched into action playing his music while he followed it, reversing the part of Orpheus, though under the spell of as mighty an intoxication. Soldiers who went with him in the campaign said the fellow was a dare-devil—which, by the way, Orpheus also was, if Virgil is to be believed—and it is certain that he would face any battery, and took his fill of the fighting. But of this episode he seldom spoke.

Finding Marian, of an afternoon, deep in one of the German authors that were winning renown by describing himself and his works—they were an increasing host—Gerard took the volume playfully out of her hand, turned over a few pages, and gave it back with a dubious curl of the underlip, saying, 'These fellows have often tried to take my life; but they mostly perpetrate a legend. I couldn't write it myself. Sometimes I construe a line or a paragraph in my poems that seems to be the man; but he is gone before I can make sure of him.'

'And in your music?' asked Marian, 'isn't he there?'

Gerard was thoughtful. 'The man I should like to be,' he said, 'not the man I am.'

But to her he was in both, a character so various, yet so true to the centre, that she felt capable of reading it off almost fluently at times; nor would she have hesitated to maintain that she was coming to know him better than he knew himself. She had now become a good German scholar. The poems and tales she most

delighted in were, as will be pardoned her, those old romantic and enchanting myths, of which Gerard, seizing upon them as prize of battle, had made so marvellous a world, that rose into splendour not less magically than did the city of Ilium to the music of the gods. A fine contrast to the French Tacitus and his blood-stained prose, heavy with crime as a piece of ancient brocade may be hung down with its crimson fringes, and all the figures flit and wave wildly in the wind. Such had been the intense and overpowering rhetoric that unfolded to Marian pictures no less dreadful than authentic of men and women in artificial society, drawn by a master's hand. There was a better society, she was now learning, as unlike the narrow, cloistered seclusion of her early home as the great wicked world that sang with all its siren voices over the deep sea and the bones that lay uncoffined beneath its glassy green waves. Love had a meaning after all—not fever, not hallucination, but communion with Nature as a living reality. To feel that chord vibrate, though one had never written a line of verse, nor could interpret a bar on the musician's score, was to be a poet. When she had entered a little more into the majesty and tenderness of a creed so beautiful—and lately she had been dipping here and there into the pages of Novalis—Marian dared to say playfully as they were seated in the drawing-room at Fenimore Place—it was during a brief stay which he made with the Harlands after their trouble—'If I had any belief in Letitia's doctrine of recurrence, do you know, Gerard'—she always pronounced his name with hesitation—'whom I should take you to be?'

'Some fine old Frankish or Suabian chieftain, I hope,' he answered, laughing—'or stay, if I were not Elven, I would be the divine Beethoven.'

'To be sure; but you are *his* disciple. No, I can't get away from the dream that you are Heinrich von Ofterdingen.'

'Will you tell me your most exquisite reason? Heinrich was a charming composer.'

'It goes deeper than that.' He bowed low. But she continued, 'Novalis understood Heinrich, and you are Heinrich. You went in search of the wonderbloom of poetry—the magic flower—when you were a lad, didn't you?'

'Alas, to this day, I have not come upon it,' threw in Gerard, making a rueful face.

'Don't interrupt, sir. That is one thing. The other is—that you *have* found it. For all things in the world live to you, speak to you, bring you messages from sunrise to sunset, as they did to him. Shall I read what the book says, and prove it?' she added with a smile.

'No, I remember it very well. Heinrich von Ofterdingen dreamed dreams, and so do I. He travelled over land and sea, driven by the same spirit that would not let Columbus rest until he had discovered a continent which everyone knew, though no one had seen its shores. And I have touched on the outermost isles thereof — San Salvador is mine, let who will conquer the ideal Mexico and Peru, and take the gold of Eldorado. Yes, and there is nothing fair, gracious or terrible in the heavens above or the earth beneath which does not sing, or play, or growl, or mutter—which does not instantly rouse up from sleep when I put my hand upon it. Flattering, but can I say false? The "secret sympathies," the "hidden order" of things—and music and poesy "that agree together as ear and mouth, one perfect instrument to comprehend, to express, the otherwise incomprehensible and ineffable"? I used to lie awake and see those black-letter pages open, as in a book of wizardry, where these and the like sentences are written. But you must know, my dear lady, how the tale ends in Novalis. To him the dramatic musician, the singer with his lute, is Arion, who finds in the stormiest sea a dolphin's back on which he may get to shore. I had to swim, and no dolphin was obliging enough to offer me his back. My poor lute has, I fear, suffered a little from the waves.'

They were both, under pretence of talking old

German romance, keeping down a slight degree of embarrassment which, lately, had crept into their conversation. Gerard, all bristles like a hedgehog when his dramas were so much as named in his hearing—for they had cost him his heart's blood, tears, and rage, and passionate endeavour—was yet more than tolerant of an enthusiasm that cared about the plays themselves, that strove to know their significance as works of art, and was making acquaintance with them—piecemeal, it is true, but still in the only right way, by meditation and sympathy. He *had* taken for his pattern of inspiration and courage that Heinrich von Ofterdingen, who was medieval German poetry embodied in a lightsome form and on fire with new great longings, insatiable, yet a spur to the highest art. How did Marian come to know it, though never having seen his compositions acted—learning of them by hearsay, and arguing from the snatches which were all he could offer at the concerts she had attended?

'You must come and hear "*The Descent of Istar*" —then decide whether Heinrich is *redivivus*,' he said at length. It was some six months after Rosie had left them.

'My mourning?' answered his friend, with a glance downwards at her dress. The light seemed to pass from her eyes; she was greatly troubled.

'I know, I know,' he replied; 'believe me, I don't forget. How could I? Since then, I have had hours of sadness, thinking whether, when I offered a suggestion—that day, during the storm—I was to blame for what followed. It has lain heavy on my heart; I never had a child of my own; and—may I say it?—Rosie was very dear to me.'

'I saw as much,' said Marian, when she could command her feelings, which was not speedily. Then, as thoughts will flash across the mind, it struck her that she had never spoken about her lost sister to Lucas—not even on the day she died—as she was now speaking to Gerard Elven. A spark might have touched her cheek; it tingled.

'Could I come?' she went on; 'to me it would be no profanation. I have so few interests. That is an old story with me. There was silence again.

'I am going to be very bold,' said the musician, looking at her steadily. 'And as you remind me of Heinrich von Ofterdingen and his dreams, I want to tell you a curious dream of mine. Curious, inasmuch as it ended in your apparition. May I?'

'And put it into a play afterwards,' said she, recovering her spirits.

'First listen to it. I think it was the liveliest dream I ever had. You must know I am an inveterate dreamer; have been so from the earliest. Sleep is to me a series of adventures, no longer terrible, as they were in boyhood, when probably I devoured things more favourable to nightmare than to visits from Queen Mab, but often as regular as the scenes of a play, the plot not worse conducted than Meyerbeer's. Doubtful commendation, you will say!— Well, well—to my story. I dream upon a plan, the secret of which Miss Harland may search out; it has always escaped me. For weeks I am in the midst of incidents, where I know every soul; then, for weeks again, I dream of empty landscapes and waterscapes, or both combined—often, wide sheets of sparkling blue waves, rocky shores, villages white as I have never seen them in the daytime, perched on lofty cliffs and in the hollows of green mountains. You cannot imagine how profoundly tranquil is the pleasure that rises up in me while I am carried past these Alpine views. For I am always travelling, and they are still. However, the dream into which you come, gracious lady, *gnädige Frau*,' he went on, bowing as in a comedy, 'did not resemble either the domestic or the picturesque. I was so struck with it that, on waking, I wrote it down, and this has fixed the whole in my remembrance.'

He paused, as if about to read from a manuscript before him of which he was desirous to give the exact words. Then he resumed: 'I dreamt, and I was in a boat, far off in foreign tropical seas, I and a company whom I did not recognise. We were sailing over smooth

glass, you would have said, for not a ripple disquieted the water, clear and transparent, when a wind suddenly rising on our poop drove us sheer across a ridge of rocks hitherto beneath the waves, but now white with foam, into a low-mouthed cavern, the roof of which expanded like a bell, but was utterly dark over our heads, and inside the cavern a sea was tossing and heaving in all the horror of tempest. Our boat, dashed against the sides, then flung out upon the whitening reef, and flung back again with equal violence, reeled like a drunken man; there was no steering it, no management possible, and I thought we were going to the bottom when, behold! it was pitched out again from the awful cavern, and in a trice it had become a vessel of considerable dimensions, with a broad deck on which I was pacing, and all the sails and equipment of an old-fashioned man-of-war. Nay, a man-of-war it was, for, looking up, I saw sailors in the rigging who discharged their pieces at another vessel, far more huge and as black as thunder, which was lashed by some tremendous contrivance to our own. The sailors fired, and were answered back with incessant volleys; the decks ran with blood; several of our men came with desperate wounds in face or breast, staggering along, and fell dead at my feet. In all the chance-medley, as happens in dreams, I took no more part than a Greek chorus, but looked on to see how it would end. It ended—I mean this fight between the ships—as suddenly as it had broken out. On the quarter-deck stood a captain, or perhaps he was an admiral, magnificent in tarnished lace, with decorations on his coat and a speaking-trumpet in his hand. What he said through the trumpet I cannot tell; but I heard it sound, and that moment our flag was hauled down. Immediately after, this same captain—but I lweary you, Mrs Harland.'

'Your tale, sir, would cure deafness. Pray go on.'

'This captain, or admiral, in tarnished lace, took me by the arm familiarly, and, making our way over the bodies of the crew which lay scattered about, we went, as one does go in dreams, without the trouble of climb-

ing or descending, into the big dark vessel that had beaten ours—I mean mine. For I well understood that this was the captain of that victorious ship. Over the side we went, and down into a saloon, which was lighted up from end to end, hung with pictures, and set out as for a feast. The captain walked me about arm-in-arm, not talking, and there was a ball going on, as by enchantment—couples dancing, arrayed in gorgeous attire, the music loud and lively, an immense racket. One would suppose it must be all very gay; but I didn't like the captain's looks, and he would press my arm and grin diabolically, and seem on the point of speaking, and then say nothing after all. I felt uncomfortable.'

'Didn't you know any one there?'

'I seemed to know them, and then they were strangers. But now let me tell you that in a sort of mad waltz—for the music was growing obstreperous—I did see two people whom I recognised. They were you—and myself.'

'Waltzing together?' said Marian, her eyes fixed on him.

'Waltzing together. Strange, wasn't it? However, I did not give the strangeness a thought, which was hardly wonderful, for the captain, with an expression more diabolical than ever, slapped me on the arm, and said jovially, "Haven't you found out the secret yet?" "No," said I. "What secret?" "Look again, you fool," said he, "don't you see it now?" "Not a bit," was my answer. "Why, you damned idiot," he answered, striking me across the eyes, "they're all dead, and so am I." Whereupon the whole company stopped in their dancing, turned round, glared at me with eyeless sockets, and burst out into horrid laughter—and we were on the golden stairs at Vivian Lodge—you and I alone—and you said to me, "Those are Mrs Latimer's guests. But who is the captain? Is it my husband?" At that I awoke; and I could still swear, so vivid was the sensation, that the boat rocked under me, the waves rolled, and we were going to be pitched a second time over the rocks and into the low-browed cavern.'

'Has not someone—a Russian—written a book called "*Dead Souls*"?' Marian asked, in a low tone of weariness, when he had finished. 'You must have been reading it.'

'No, no, I have never read it. But, was it not a singular dream? And—excuse me, if I go too far—you know the society which Mrs Latimer affects is not to my taste;—how exactly the notion of "*Dead Souls*," waltzing about like leaves driven by the wind, hits them off!'

'*We* were waltzing too, it appears,' said Marian with rather a hopeless smile. 'Are we a couple of "Dead Souls," like the rest of them?—I should say it was only a confused reminiscence of our adventure on the cliff. And the captain, or admiral, who took you over the side, was not my husband; it was Lord Wootton.'

'A shrewd scientific account of it all,' said Gerard, observing her still; 'and yet—what does it portend? Have you tried to guess?'

'*Träume sind Schäume*,' answered Marian, not so seriously. 'Foam and fury signifying nothing. Do you think I shall ever pronounce German as I ought?'

'That sentence was perfect—not a trace of the islander. You have a good ear.'

'And a voice, I think you once told me.'

He answered quietly, 'At least equal to Frau von Carolath's. And hers, dramatically speaking, is superb.'

'I shall envy the Frau when she takes the part of your goddess. I have been studying it lately, with a good master—indeed, my old master at Limbeck—Signor Morosini. You were acquainted once, he tells me.'

'Ages have rolled over us since then. I thought he was dead.'

'No, alive, poor, and in London. Miss Raby found him out, took me to see him; and now I practise music of a morning under his guidance. He will not come here; why or wherefore I don't inquire. Mr Harland

quarrelled with him, I fancy. But he is mad about you and the musical drama.'

'Pray Heaven the madness may spread. But come to Wynflete.'

'As one of your "Dead Souls driven by the wind,"' said Marian, still rather excited and moving about the room restlessly. 'Well, we are not obliged to act our dreams out.'

'We defy augury,' was Elven's last word.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GODDESS COMES DOWN

THE great rehearsals were in full swing, a sight which to Mrs Harland was at once novel, curious, thrilling, and a study in human nature. 'You will not like it—be prepared for disappointment,' said the composer, leading her to a chair from which she might see and not be seen. "*Istar*" is a fine tragedy, as I think,' he went on, with his air of amused candour, 'but rehearsals are inevitably comic. There never was an "*Eulenspiegel*" that could outdo them. Watch—it is like training a menagerie;—I am, unluckily, the bear-master. Now I will show you rocks, trees and beasts—and here is Orpheus to set them going to the sound of his flute. Pity me, and don't be astonished when you see another Gerard Elven spring out of the sack. My wretched old days will have to be lived over again. *Gott sei mir gnädig!*' He left her with a smile, and his eyes sparkled.

Another—not the same—neither poet, dreamer, musician, hero, but manager—'the Napoleon of the greenroom,' said his friends; and his enemies took up the word, making of it a boomerang to smite him sharply as it turned back. Elven had shown himself an incomparable director, even on the boards of provincial German theatres, with a company picked up off the pavement, and operas that he cursed for their silliness, though having no choice but to give them. Here, at all events, the action, the music, the decoration, were such as he approved. His chief officers, too, beginning with

Conrad Henle, knew what the man of genius desired, and were as loyal to him as his own heart and hands. Frau von Carolath, a rare woman, with all the German lambency of feeling, had spirit as well; she rose to the tragic greatness of her part, obeyed the master, and did not resist his interpretation of scenes and phrases. Marian observed her, day after day, with growing astonishment. The goddess—every word of whose Mrs Harland now knew as if they had come spontaneously to her, and did but express the thoughts she had cherished from her girlish days at Rylsford—stood revealed, as a pure ideal conception, transformed by some indescribable charm to singing marble. It was a snow-image, touched into life by love, and in its grandeur turned to Parian immortality. The reading of the part was beyond Morosini's. Had there been no figure in the play but Frau Caroline, as they called her, Marian would have sunk absorbed in a monologue so full of tender and passionate beauty; but others, not equal, crossed the stage, and on every side was a confusion of interests, a battle, now large, now despicably small, of jealousies, reputations, pretentions, mixed with generous impulses, too, yet exasperating as an outrage upon the high design they were all engaged in.

She could bear with what Gerard pleasantly described as *La cuisine du théâtre*—the litter of green rooms, and the ugliness of a make-up seen by daylight; —this would not signify, so long as the men and women themselves moved under stress of a poetic inspiration. But the human litter offended, and was a scandal, which the too severe artist in her rebelled against. Yet Elven did not seem to rebel. He was here, there, and everywhere; had a thousand eyes; a voice that thundered, coaxed, pleaded, and could be anything he wished at a moment's notice; a temper not to be worn down, and an iron will, the result of clear vision. For he knew what he had meant his drama to express; and neither Lord Wootton, nor Frau Caroline, nor the whole company pulling with one accord, were able to change him from his pedestal. He was the creator, they could but execute the

ideas of a brain which knew its own thought. The man, so armed with insight and resolve, was irresistible. Marian feared him, marvelled at him, was subdued by him—by the tones and gestures that wrought upon his associates nor were meant for her—until she saw in her world only this unparalleled artist, who had in him the qualities of a King of men. And her task, all the while, was only to look on! That drove her wild.

What could she do, besides lingering in the side-scenes, or watching from an almost empty and darkened theatre the frequent rehearsals? Given, as she had been, to castle-building from of old, and now left by Mr Harland to dispose of her time as she chose, while he in the society of the Latimers talked finance and sought amusement—she began to feel the passion for acting that had ever lain dormant within her; and, alone, in her solitary apartment, or down by the sea where no one was likely to spy what she did, there were moments when she, too, must attempt the *rôle* of Istar. She laughed at herself, but went on practising; nor would it have appeared strange in a house given up wholly to repetitions from morning till night, if her amateur feats had been noticed. They passed in the universal excitement. But Marian went a step farther. In profound secrecy, mocking at the idle thought she was carrying into effect, she ordered for herself in London and had sent down an exact reproduction of the splendid Eastern raiment wherewith Frau Caroline was to be decked out as the Goddess of War and Love—fine fanciful garments, copied from ancient urns, or suggested by exquisite Greek gems cut in intaglio.

Her looking-glass declared that she would make a fascinating Istar; she was, indeed, much more like to an Oriental Queen, with those dark eyes, abundant black hair, and features habitually pale, than the fair German. 'All I should require,' she thought, turning from the glass, 'would be to produce myself, as I am, under the lights, allowing for distance and strong effects.' She did envy Frau von Carolath. *There* was a vocation—a life in itself, and its own reward. 'I wish

I had gone on the stage, instead of marrying,' she concluded with a sigh.

The sigh deepened on receiving, a day or two afterwards, from Letitia, what sounded like a warning note, harsh but friendly as a fog signal, out of the cloud into which every step was plunging her. 'I am ashamed of my superstitions,' wrote Miss Harland, 'as you will certainly think them. But while I sit alone in this great house,'—she was staying at Fenimore Place; not even Gerard could prevail on her to go down to Wynflete—'alone, or with memories like shadows about me, I dream and dream; and you, Marian, come into these half-waking illusions. How shall I give them an outline? It is as though I once felt your warm hand in mine, firm and solid, on which I could press in my fatigue, but now—? The other night, as I awoke, you were in the room, close to me, but I could not see you, and your fingers, which I did make out in the moonlight, were vapour to the touch, cold—oh, how cold! And they melted from me. Now, will you forgive an old woman's fears? Come home, my dear; Wynflete is haunted; for you, at anyrate, it is unwholesome. Have you ever spent a happy day under Lord Wootton's roof? Only at the beginning, I am sure. Places, like persons, are fatal to us. Do humour me this once. I write with a heavy heart; and that is a good saying, "Make no haste in time of clouds."—Your LETITIA.'

Well, had Marian ever known a happy day, she asked herself, in these old desecrated cloisters? She was reading this letter upstairs in her own room; it had a large mullioned window, and beneath the window an altar, perhaps a shrine, the carved stones of which were partly hidden by great hangings of velvet. On the walls, between escutcheons somewhat effaced, shone the arms of the Woottons, and the houses allied to them, brilliant usurpers on that gloom. It was a strange destination for the Abbot's private chapel—which antiquarians thought this might be—to serve as a lady's chamber. And on the gorgeous many-coloured shrine lay Istar's robes and crown. She took them off, under

an inspiration hard to define, and laid them elsewhere. Until that moment she did not realise the flavour of incongruity to which Mr Browne Vandyke gave a name more formidable, in this combination of play-acting with the scenes of the past. Nor did the feeling continue; but afterwards she remembered it.

'We defy augury'—Gerard's quotation, which had in it something ominous, coming from so sad a play—was on her lips when she had gone twice over Miss Harland's epistle. She would stay—must she not stay?—until '*Istar*' had been given. Then she would go home. But the word 'home' struck on her imagination like a funeral knell. 'Our home is with those we love,' she thought. Had Letitia not been there awaiting her, no—she could not have gone back to that house. A dim and fantastic project of travelling for years—round the world—to the East, in the track of General Greystoke, began to smile at her, with no little of the charm we find in opening a secret door, though but within our day-dreams, whereby to escape from the presence of cares that are seated on our hearth—implacable Furies. In this temper she would sing, rehearse, act the *rôle* she had assigned to herself, living in the magic Syrian story that bore no likeness to things modern or at hand.

And it is the afternoon, clear-eyed, warm, golden-kirtled, which is to make '*Istar*' known at length in these islands. All things are ready; the goddess will come down.

When the Harlands entered the box which had been reserved for them, all the rest of the house was crowded with a palpitating and excitable throng, the low murmur of whose conversation rose at times into a louder key, but for the most part went on like a whispered accompaniment to some action behind the scenes. To Marian's left were visible the great folding curtains that served instead of a drop, sombre, without figures, inflicting on the mind a vague presentiment of tragedy soon to be enacted, but in no wise distracting it by a picture which

would give either too little or too much of the coming story. By some structural changes the chapter-room, not losing its proportions, had been lengthened, and now, in the semi-darkness, with its roof in dim arabesque, it appeared to be a vast and gloomy cave, in which the fripperies and displays of fashion would find but little splendour. And, in fact, albeit so many there were of the less artistic sex—by which Mr Browne Vandyke always meant the feminine—some grace had been bestowed on them whereby, laying aside the hats, feathers and tall erections that they are wont to bring with them of an afternoon to such assemblies, they submitted to a quiet, almost religious costume, as if they had been Spanish ladies at mass or evensong. The play would be acted as much off the stage as on it; for strict rules, not suffering applause, and a well-understood condemnation of all talk and chatter during the course of the drama obliged those who did not rise with it into ideal regions to yawn or fall asleep. '*Istar*' was not intended to amuse. 'Are you amused,' Conrad Henle would ask in his satirical manner, 'when you study the sublime roof of the Sistine, or stand in the tribune at Florence? We have a music and a myth to set before you that claim your homage like those Sibyls, Prophets and marble deities. Forget the opera, this is the antique world.'

Would they forget? Would they rise to the height? Marian, glancing round on the faces, attitudes, groupings, saw, as she fancied, a strange intermixture of those who had come to take this revelation home to themselves with those who would wear the name of it on their breasts like a star, for the glory thereof. She did not dare to ask what share in choosing them the astute man had sitting there by her side, his eyes fixed too frequently upon Mrs Latimer in the box opposite. She dreaded some pulling of the strings that would show Lucas making a victim of Gerard, and in her secret heart prayed against too sudden a disclosure of the cheat, if any there were. The play must be played out now. It must not fail. Yet so many accidents were possible. Oh, if the men

and women seated luxuriously in the monkish stalls—a doubtful company—would be all of her mind, how they would encourage, how put life into the actors, singers, musicians! For inspiration was *their* gift, did they but know it.

They, however, sat in expectation; the voices died; there fell an intense quiet on them. And, at the sounding of a lofty strain from the trombones (invisible, like the rest of the orchestra) the curtains drew apart. An immeasurable scene! Far away the waters of the ocean, sunlit, calm, without a ripple. Nearer, the snow-capped mountains, bare to the summit of trees or forest. A sky like glass, golden-flushed on the horizon. Music as soft as swan's-down falling on the brilliant blue, and there seeming to brood. Deep in the bass, a note of melancholy, so dreaming, intermittent, that surely it was not aware of itself. And into the sad, sweet vision came floating up from the unknown a sacred lotus flower, resplendent white on the waters, within its cup a child sleeping, whose long locks, the colour of the sun, fell over the edge of the lotus, while wings as yellow lay folded across its bosom. The lullaby of the violins was heard in this dream, out of which, the waters rippling now and flashing here and there, uprose, like phantom clouds through which the dawn is sending a faint crimson, the maidens of the sea, who, as they flock round the winged slumber of the child, break into a choral hymn and tell of his might which is from everlasting. For he is Eros, most ancient, the Power of Love, father of gods, himself the unborn, the unconquerable. His dreams are the worlds that pass. He is always at rest, and the might dwelling in him is beauty and desire. Through endless seeming changes Eros abides; in every play he is the story, the actors, the scene, the audience. Now will he multiply himself anew and dream a fresh dream. Thus they, phantom clouds, crimson-winged, utter their chant. A gathering tumult, yet subdued, is audible towards the close. But like an enhancement of the profound peace it seems, through which, floating ever on, the lotus reaches a green sea cavern, full of mysterious light, and into the

heart of this hollow emerald vanishes with the slumbering child.

No, there must be no breaking of the spell, no clapping of hands. Some, already charmed, are dreaming with Eros, the unconquerable; their silence shows it. Others, and they the most, look eagerly to the stage. What succeeds there? An awful darkness, forms huge, uncouth, flitting in the mirk, lying prone upon the waves, and a tempest of mighty discords, somehow not unmusical, bound in a harmony that requires vast measures of comprehension, an ear, so to speak, of Night and Erebus, delighting in the chaotic sublime. It was this knowing confusion or enlargement of the scales that, except when Gerard Elven had his own way, as now, and wielded the resources of a colossal orchestra, made his enemies to blaspheme. But the chords of all these intermingling measures do beat their music out, at length, persuasively; the hearers feel that they are viewing a pattern on the under side, and by a subtle suggestion they anticipate a dawn which will ascend above the realm of chaos, all the lovelier that this was terror-striking. The multitude of voices thunder out of their dark, when far above them emerges a bright sky, unflecked and flawless; beneath it the ice pinnacles of some legend-haunted range. Astonishment speaks loud in the chorus of the sea monsters; they will rise up and assail the lightsome city. But the great sun breaks forth in that new firmament; a figure is seen, high on the mountains, human, though of proportions unknown to the children of men; and he sings his song of the morning, and crowns himself with royalty. The forms of the abyss shall do homage to Bel, to him the many-named, whose sanctuaries look down from every hill visited by the sun, his throne and chariot. A beautiful defiance, yet having in it elements preterhuman, the strength of living fire and its wrath. In the background hover shadowy the fresh race of gods. And a huge battle covers sea and sky, fills the mountain sides with clamour, darkens the sun. It is echoed, enforced, flung backwards and forwards in waves of sound by all the instruments, which themselves

tell a dubious tale of defeat or victory. Which of these hosts will overcome? The Titans rise and rise, spread out and up, gigantic, with raven pinions broad as their shields. The sun grows dim; it sinks towards ocean; a heavy, purple sky, ensanguined with clouds, announces that victory will fall to the powers of darkness. They, redoubling their harsh music, fill the heavens and press upon the gates of the City of Bel. He is wrapped in their smoke; their forky lightnings wheel and glitter around him. The City of the Sun loses its radiance, and these conquering discords put down the hymns of the new gods. All will be lost if no help comes.

While the dissonance is triumphant, the sunset near, and the abyss opens its jaws of darkness, behold, in one shining place of the western sky—a mere, a lake, tender with dying rose—glimmers the evening star. It is the crown of the goddess, who stands in mid air, a panoply of silver about her, upon her breast the thunder cloud, in her right hand a shaft which burns as with fire at the point. Stretching it out over the tumult she commands peace; Titans and gods fall silent, and she opens her divine lips to sing the Romance of the Star. There shall be no victory of Chaos; though it quench the sun, yet will the light endure, and the evening and the morning shall be one day. She calls up the fainting powers of Bel; the city grows radiant as a gem newly cut; the Titans, wounded by her spear, fall from the crystal battlements, and as they are hurled in headlong flight, Istar speaks their doom. They shall take the forms of beasts prowling in the dense forest that springs up at her word, clothing the mountains from base to summit —there let them roar and rage. Into the volcanos others of them shall be cast; yet others shall the islands of the sea keep down. Then the All Father, to whom she has given victory, opens his mouth. To him shall the forest be sacred, a place unapproachable. Whoso, of gods or creatures, dares to hunt in its shades is accursed; the sword shall slay that one. But Istar, henceforth, shall be as the Supreme, having dominion over all things. Surely, she is the mind, the heart of Bel.

Together they join in a glorious song, when, between them, on the heights where they are standing, strides a cloaked figure, with eyes profound in their vision, and a foreboding voice. Nebo, the seer of the heavenly hosts, the prophet, bids them cease. 'Give not dominion to Istar,' he cries, with fierce energy; 'thou shalt rue, and to her it will bring no profit.' The virgin-goddess, turning upon this screech owl, bids him peace, but her spear cannot silence Nebo. 'Thy heart is yet the heart of deity,' so runs the strain in which he replied, 'for thou lovest nought save war and conquest. But, say, canst thou trust thy heart?' There is a trouble in Istar's accents, though she gives him sharp words. 'Not trust her heart? Wherefore not?' The prophet, to a mingled music of regret and hope, tells them how this younger race of gods, which has subdued the sea-monsters, will not always reign; there is change in Heaven itself; all things move onward to death; a fresh dynasty, a world lower than the sun and the sky, will make them one day to be forgotten. It is the law, Adrasteia, to which all are subject. 'And thou, Istar, he concludes, 'wilt be the instrument of this downfall—thou, the calamity of the gods.' When he has uttered his spell, the armed virgin, without a syllable, moves slowly away, her head sunk upon her breast in reverie, of which the orchestra paints a dim shadow, as it were. During that chant, it was observed with admiration how her colour faded, and her limbs appeared to be sinking under her. She leaned heavily upon the massive spear; at the moment of her quitting the stage there were those who fancied that she had fallen just outside the scene.

'What an effective bit of business?' whispered Lucas to Marian.

But Marian did not hear. She was reading with flushed temples a note which had just been brought her. 'I will come back,' she said hastily, and left the box. Her husband hardly observed that she was gone; for, at that moment the curtains drew together again—the First Act, as it would have been called on the operatic stage

—was over, and a general movement—by permission, this once, of Conrad Henle—began to make itself felt. Lord Wootton came to exchange opinions, Mrs Latimer on his arm, and they went forth in company, the vivacious lady well pleased to escape into the sunshine, hinting that, however bewitching the music, she still preferred a play of which the Prologue was not in Heaven. 'It is, no doubt, sublime,' she murmured, 'and antique; those are the right adjectives, are they not, Lucas? I caught them all round me. But I used to be sublime and antique myself before I learned to be decadent—which is far nicer. I like impressions; ideas are quite beyond me.'

'Impressions will come in the Second Act,' replied Lucas. 'How did Frau Caroline strike you?'

'A little too much of the sick pathetic—in my poor opinion. Germans will be sentimental. But no, don't mistake me. Her singing thrills one; and, in spite of Mr Vandyke, who says women take no heed of orchestra, I really was carried away by that splendid combination of effects. Isn't that the style?'

Lord Wootton had been listening. 'I will try to hear with your ears, Mrs Latimer,' he said, half to himself, but courteously. 'Mine are full of other notes—an old man's memories. I *judge* all this to be music; I cannot feel it. Doubtless you are in the right.'

'It is the Greek tragedy restored,' said Mr Vandyke, with enthusiasm, 'but they had no such instrumentation. Every chord significant, yet none of the delusive thing called word-painting. We go back—how many centuries?—with Æschylus, Hesiod, to the Ionians, who were Asiatic in their sense of religious gloom and their wild mountain ritual. Now, Mrs Latimer, prepare for an introduction to a finer Theocritus. Ah, yes, *there* will be an impression for you.'

'I am quite ready to join the women who mourn for Adonis,' she replied. 'And delighted they do not call him Tammuz.'

The snowy ranges are towering up again, under a

sky as blue as the distant waters. In front opens a forest glade, rugged, precipitous, lush with vegetation of the early spring. A sound of cascades tinkling amid the rocks; and over all a warm, light veil of mist. It is morning in the Lebanon. Far away among clouds, if not built of them fantastically, shimmers and gleams a city of many turrets, changing like the fire in a star. And up the glade after echoing horns comes the hunt, horses caparisoned, hounds baying, the huntsman with his troop, youthful, adventurous, mad to be in among the wild creatures that haunt the forest. It is awake on every side, another music answering the music of the horns as to a challenge, this deeper and with deadly significance, unlike the joyous halloo. Adonis, the mighty hunter, laughs and takes up the challenge; he will be king of the forest, slay these beasts, and feast his companions on their flesh. But a strange apparition starts up in his path, some ancient thing of the woods, as if a tree, gnarled and twisted, that had found utterance. 'Knowest thou the forest is dedicate and inviolable?' exclaims the threatening voice. 'I dedicate its inhabitants with my swift arrows,' is the retort of Adonis; and he exalts in a martial lyric the glory of the bow. That wizened figure has grown, while the hunter sings, to a giant, armed in golden bronze, a chaplet of flaming jewels on his helm. 'The forest is mine; I am the lord of the worlds, thou mortal intruder,' he roars, with the voice of hurricanes and sweeping tempests, 'I am the Lord.' A majestic movement as of sacred trumpets blown by angelic lips bears witness to his proclamation; but the hunter levels his weapon, Bel lifts the invincible spear; they stand as in some relief from Nineveh, poised against each other —when from the sky above glides in a golden beam Istar the goddess, chanting while she descends. The All-Father and the huntsman of Lebanon remain fixed in their attitude, each fair to look upon, but in naught resembling, except the charm under which they feel themselves subdued.

Istar, beautiful as the light, not armed, in a shining

garment of tissue, throws herself between the combatants. 'Will not the All-Father keep his hand from slaying? And, Adonis—the world is wide—send thine arrows flying over it, only not here. Reverence the holy place.' But the hunter, laughingly replies, 'When I have made an end of the beasts, and the wood hath become a fenced garden, call it holy—not before.' Bel grasps the spear; in a moment it will strike the youth dead. It has flown from his hand; yet Adonis takes no wound. But in the orchestra some dreadful crash of instruments, and from Istar a cry almost human, agonising and brave —announce what has befallen.

The virgin plucks from her heart Bel's deadly weapon. 'Thou has murdered thy wisdom, All-Father,' she weeps; and the woods, the hills, echo in soft whispers a lament which has no little sweetness—pity for some great good lost, joy in a feeling hitherto unknown. The wrath of Bel flashes out upon her; he ascends in a cloud, whence proceeds in lightning flashes the oracle which is to smite and cast down the proud goddess. 'Hast thou a woman's pity? feel thou henceforth a woman's love.' His great thunders roll; but in the answering music there is almost a touch of irony. 'Feel thou—a woman's love,' it repeats with infinite modulations, soft as sleep, radiant as the dawn. Istar, in a fierce transport, takes up the words, plays upon them, makes them her own. And the mighty hunter, laying at her feet the arrows of the chase, entreats her to pardon, to love, to slay him. Let her go up again to that high heaven.

But she answers, weeping a little, with a new expression upon features until now austere, 'Gather, if thou canst, the motes in the sunbeam, and therewith make an ascent for Istar. The gem is cast out of the sky; wilt thou wear it on thy breast?' They heed not the resounding thunders. Bel, from his cloud, observes them. He does not strike a second time; something has palsied the invincible; now, instead of naked strength, he will betake himself to craft and cunning. The new heart in Istar must grow that it may feel a keener grief. He will wait

and watch. The music tells us how deep and dreadful is anger when it broods in eternity on a vengeance foreordained. As the hunter and the goddess walk hand in hand downwards through the glade, a stillness overtakes them, and the scene closes.

Now, Conrad Henle, the rules are broken to shivers. Hark how the chapter-room has itself become an orchestra, cheering, giving back the thunders! Had Frau Caroline ever sung so divinely? 'That is passion, not sentiment,' said Vandyke. 'What fire has burnt up the German tinder in the woman?'

'She has borrowed some notes from the violin and some from the clarion,' replied Mrs Latimer. 'How did she keep them in reserve?'

'And the irony in her submission—really heroic! Her descent is a defiance. True woman that, Mrs Latimer!' said the decadent. 'Men break the law; women trample on it.'

'But what have you done with Marian?' enquired Pauline of Lucas.

He shrugs his shoulders. 'Behind the scenes,' he says indifferently, 'here is a line in pencil; the Frau Caroline was not well, Marian was taking care of her.'

'Not well! She is superbly well. How could a sick woman give those chest notes?' exclaimed Mrs Latimer. 'Why she has even contrived to look taller! But we can take a fresh observation—there is the signal!—let us lose none of this crowning act.' . . .

Between dark gorges and under granite peaks, away in a narrow perspective, the world lies desolate, sands moving lightly and blowing up into clouds of white dust; but on this side of the Alp every green tree flourishes; the grass waves down to a stream which is liquid diamond; anemones, hyacinths, crocuses mix their colours boldly, and are a pure delight; birds twitter in the leaves unseen; and once or twice the nightingale flings a shaft of burning melody across the air, which seems to have brought the sun low, making it a voluptuous golden eye, full and yet mild. On a bed of purple

blossom Istar half reclines, while Adonis, a little way off, leaning on his elbow, looks out wistfully towards the sand pillars whirling in their eternal waltz. Istar, a white wonder, sings of love; the nightingale answers, not Adonis. At length she breaks into the passionate key that entreats, that almost reproaches, 'What is better than love—our love—in a garden of pleasure?' Out of his musing the wild huntsman replies, 'Life is better—seest thou not, oh, my Queen, how the world decays since thou hast imprisoned the spring within these mountain walls? I watch the wilderness striding on; it will eat up the harvest, and never can there be another. Pity these mortals.' To which, in a moving minor, she returns, 'Pity me, my Lord, my Love, me the gem that was plucked from the sky.' It is a contest of loves—the man's task calling him to do it, the goddess not troubled about these creatures, short-lived, impotent, things of clay, oblivious phantoms, wingless, like unto dreams—why should he vex the balmy stillness with remembrance of their laments? Will not these, too, pass? But he hears with kindly human ears, not as a god. And now it is her turn to complain, 'I cannot dower thee with undying life; therefore I keep thee out of the reach of harm, here in this sweet garden. Sing, paint, put into beautiful words all that it has to enchant thee; sing of me, and let the years fleet.' Adonis takes up an instrument of reeds, and it is at his lips; but after a few plaintive sighings he throws it from him. 'My arrows, and the conquering bow, wherewith I slew the wild prey of the woods—where are they?' Great and growing unrest in the soft tones which accompany this dialogue as of winds in the branches. Then—

Nebo enters from above, and his ringing tones announce that he brings the bow and arrows to Adonis, with news of a huge monster laying waste the fields. He offers the huntsman a prospect of immortal renown, but in ambiguous words, the sound of which allures this tamer of the beasts, but to Istar, well read in the speech of the gods, it bears another meaning; it is death disguised in oracular sentences. The sharp controversy

ensuing has all the bright, swift interchange of sarcasm, scorn, forewarning and dramatic opposition with which we are familiar upon the Greek stage. Adonis utters only a syllable now and again; but he has taken up his weapons, and at last, addressing them, celebrates their ancient deeds. All through, a deep murmur has resounded, which the granite cliffs give out in vast echoes; and above, a mighty mist fashions to the countenance of Bel, but dislimns while we look. Istar smites the garden to a desert. We see her climbing the peaks, and there she lifts appealing hands to the All-Father, a helpless woman, not the spear-wielder who had driven down Titans from the battlements of Heaven. A mocking thunder replies; but she is still a suppliant.

Below, and beyond her ken, the forest stretches once more. The horns awake; Adonis goes to the chase, and where he moves the spring comes too, joyous, with a carolling of birds. He wears no armour now; lightly clad, he pursues the venomous beasts that fly before him; and the trees crash in their flight, thunder rattles, a silver rain pours down. Fierce noises declare that the whole wild wood is leagued against him; but on he goes, until, breaking through brush and thicket, the monstrous boar appears. It is surely nothing of this world, but some power called up from darkness, which has taken this uncouth form. The reminiscences of chaotic music and the battle of giants, now deepening these harmonies, hint the secret; Bel has made a compact with the grave, and the grave sends up its miasma shapen to a cloud-beast, bearing the likeness of the boar. Adonis defies him with manly grace and good-humour; the forest throws him back his own notes, strange and solemn; the earth itself moans beneath his feet. And thrice he shoots at the boar; thrice his arrow goes astray; the forest exults; an immense chorus fills our hearing, cries against cries, and in the open glade we see Adonis fallen, the boar standing above him. Under a lurid sun the stream runs purple to the sea. Our mighty hunter lies dead.

And the wood nymphs emerge from their hiding-

places; the trees take up their lament; the stream utters its voice. On a couch of his beloved flowers the youth is laid, when Istar, in garments black as the wing of midnight, comes alone from where she has been pouring out her idle prayer. At the sight of Adonis wounded unto death, she puts up a hand, as if to pluck the hair from her head; but a divine shame holds her back from the weakness of women. She bends over him, takes the body into her arms, and, with a groan, lets it fall. Then she entreats Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, to restore him, offering a great ransom, but confused murmurs rising out of the ground tell her that no price can buy the Lord of Spring; he shall never be seen on the hillside any more. The goddess turns again to the All-Father. She accepts her doom. Let only Adonis revive, and she renounces the glory of war, the place that was hers on the snowy heights, all majesty and greatness. Bel is silent. But his messenger comes, a new god, Hermes, winged and roguish, to mock with delicate humour the dethroned. Her doom was fixed from the beginning. She shall not ascend to Heaven, but Adonis will come with the spring, and die as the sun turns his chariot down towards Hades. Can she endure to mourn him year by year, with these elegiac maidens? Or consent to be the goddess of the moon, not the evening star that shone far away from mortal things? Her name shall be the foam-born, and her path—he points it out with his golden wand—is over-sea to Paphos.

Once more she stoops to Adonis; his dead beauty conquers, and the hope of spring. Exultant she mounts the moon-shaped car; her garments change to gold; doves fly round on every side; the sea broadens; and standing with her face to the morning, the snows of Lebanon high in front, the city of the gods crowded with all deities that once followed her to battle but now gaze upon her from its walls, she kindles into a chant they have never heard. The doom is common to them all. Istar has descended; Istar shall reign. Thereupon the whole orchestra repeats her announcement thrill-

ingly; the maidens coming down to the shore cast it over the waves; the sea stirs beneath it as the tides to the moon. There is none, she sings, that can escape love—no, not one; neither in the shades nor in Bel's court, nor Bel himself—the arrows of the chase shall bring them down; the forest shall bloom as a garden, the world move to this dance, and her own name, though she has sold it for love, shall be given evermore to the evening star. 'Sleep, Adonis, my Lord, my Love, until the dark days pass; then come with spring, and I will meet thee on the mountain. Thou art dead that thou mayest live again and yet again, for ever, and my descent is thy triumph.' But he lies asleep on his bed of flowers. Over the sea, above which Aphrodite floats in her moon-shaped car, a lotus spreads its leaves; the divine cup holds within its petals a slumbering child. Eros has dreamt his dream. All the music melts to a symphony of instruments which lifts it beyond time and change into some sphere, perfect and unalterable now, where the past is sacred, as in a god's remembrance. An astonishing music, at once rapture and rest. It has subdued the multitude, and they listen until it goes out, but none thinks of applauding.

'Oh, you have saved the play—you, Marian! How can I thank you? What would you ask of me? Marian, you are Istar — my goddess! You — you alone!'

Gerard was holding her hands. He would not let them go. And she was shedding the sweetest tears she had ever known. In her bright garments, a chaplet of roses upon her brow, and on her feet golden sandals, Istar—Marian Greystoke—stood there in Frau Caroline's room, the task of her life done beyond recall. 'I am Istar,' she said, not hearing her own words so much as dreaming them, 'I—and for your sake, Gerard! Oh, my master, my king, for you I did it! Was it not for you?' Now she held his hands. They were in a world apart. 'Once I thought my days would be most miserable. I never did think they would

come to this. Love unconquerable! What hours they have been! I saw you, Gerard — the true Gerard, hidden under this'—she touched his breast lightly— 'from the time I entered, gliding down with the star, until it was all ended. I saw you every moment. I tried to put the very same heart into my singing out of which the words and the music sprang. Have I done that—Master?' Perhaps in all the play she had never uttered a sentence so tenderly.

He could not speak. His breath came in quick pulses; but he still held the two hands, and they held him. A tap was heard at the door.

'Don't let anyone in,' she whispered; 'not Lucas, not anyone.' Pauline was there. He sent her away. 'Now go yourself,' said Marian. 'We must face this foolish world. But, Gerard, can aught but death part you and me?'

'Nothing can part us,' he replied. And they said not a syllable more.

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

'ATTENTION held them mute,' says the Latin poet often; and so it did in this case, but only until the echo of that amazing final symphony died away. Then all tongues broke into a prodigious chatter. Hardly any two were found agreeing. Yet, as regards the splendour of Elven's composition, and Marian's rendering of it, there was a 'full concent,' to speak Miltonically. But how did Mrs Harland come to be acting at all? On this point a philosopher might have taken delight in observing the growth of legend. It was certain that Frau von Carolath did not sing after the conclusion of the First Act. What led to her retirement? She ascribed it to influenza, but influenza does not vanish away in forty-eight hours; and at the next representation she sang — not so passionately as her substitute, although with grace and gentle warmth. Her understudy had fallen ill—again it was given out—the very morning of the play. Was ever such opportune illness? Elderly persons shook their heads in a silent negation; rich people had fancies, they implied, and Mrs Harland must have paid no small sum to Frau Caroline that she might indulge this musical freak. Young George Hastie knew the exact amount. 'A cheque for seven hundred and fifty pounds, payable to bearer,' which Mr Harland signed after an hour's quarrel with his wife and her veiled threat of suicide. Everyone knew, added George, that Harland was a reformed rake, or not quite reformed; hence the lady's bargain with him, fancy for fancy. 'Mrs Latimer

draws him with a single hair,' laughed the young cynic. 'It's her own hair, too—rather an uncommon thing in these days.'

But even Conrad Henle was perplexed. He had never seen Marian practising, and that she should have improvised the character on a sudden was not to be supposed. Then Gerard—no, he would not think it —would not, unless compelled. For the musician had overmastering impulses, a head capable of the most unexpected ideas, and a heart on fire. Every bit of flame in that tragedy had leaped out of him or Rudolph—a pair of madmen. Rudolph had as good as gone into an asylum; what if Gerard did worse? No help anywhere. These Englishmen? They had machinery inside them and were wound up; they took no account of genius, except as merchandise. What did Mr Harland know of the business, for example? He went about, the same smiling, plausible *entrepreneur*, when this eruption of Ætna had burst upon them all, just shaking the ashes from his coat sleeve, not even complaining that the heat was too much. Yet his wife was not by any means a domestic animal, lapping up its milk on the hearth and purring after the meal. 'How she rose to that last Chant d'Amour,' thought Conrad, 'as if every note was sure to bring down a god! And Mr Harland sits by simpering. Now in his place I should send Gerard a challenge. But these idiots say he has sent him a cheque.'

That was another legend, in which, oddly enough, Charlie Latimer felt disposed to believe. Charlie had sat through Marian's performance, recognising her long before the few did to whom she was most familiar; he saw and heard in the acting a passion never yet displayed by Marian Greystoke;—who was the man? That Lucas would sell his own wife to carry out a speculation, Latimer did not doubt one instant. Had he sold Marian to this German fellow? It was worth enquiry. For months and months Harland, in chase of Pauline, had put himself at a disadvantage with the Latimers. They were drawing him on to a pitfall, the lady half in

sport, Charlie in death-dealing earnest. Harland fancied he was buying them both. To complete the transaction, he might be selling Marian, not in Smithfield, yet as coolly as the proverbial Englishman that takes five pounds for his partner and a quart of beer. Except that Elven would probably get the five pounds. What was to be done? 'Pauline,' he said to his wife that evening, as soon as they were alone, 'you can say pretty sharp things to other women, and about them. Mind you say nothing of the sort to Mrs Harland. Just let her know you think her acting beats that German woman's all to fits. And then hold your tongue.'

Pauline made a charming face at him. 'The slave of the ring hears and obeys,' said she. 'I wish you would tell me what you think, dear.'

'I will—in a month's time,' he answered.

The newspapers were full of it. And they, as reconcilers are wont, took any part of any story that pleased them, mixed the whole with their own conjectures, and served it up to the public piping hot. Mrs Greystoke, at home in her humble parsonage, read these reports sadly; but she, too, allowed the rich to be somewhat eccentric; the day was long gone by when she could venture on expostulating with Marian. It would have signified nothing though she had. In a frame of mind, tranquil but intensely self-conscious, that lady, on stepping down from the stage, put away her robes and crown, forbore to attend the theatre, and did not open her mouth to deny or to confirm the statements made about her in public or private. Mr Harland put no questions at all. He went so far as to say precisely what Gerard Elven had said, 'You have saved our lives,' and she looked at him and turned into the Abbey grounds, with the ghost of a smile hovering upon her lips. Whose lives had she saved? He should learn by-and-by.

The month which Charlie Latimer gave himself was nearly up. To-morrow would be the last *matinée* of '*Istar*.' Then to the four winds. Marian, walking in the hour which precedes sunset about the ruins, watched

them put on their raiments of russet and gold, with topaz lights for their windows, and above them a sky of immeasurable height. She knew Gerard would be coming that way. There was not the slighest concealment in her thoughts as she went boldly forward to meet him. But he was startled somewhat by her grave expression.

'When shall you be leaving, Gerard?' she began. 'They say in three or four days. Is it so?'

'Yes,' he answered, under his breath, walking beside her.

'And then you go to America?'

'Then I go to New York.'

'From Liverpool? By what vessel?'

'From Liverpool, on Wednesday week, in the *Golden Fleece*.'

A minute, perhaps, they walked in silence. After which Marian said quietly, 'May I go as well in the *Golden Fleece?*'

He was not astonished, yet his colour went and came. They stopped dead in their walk.

'You saved my play,' said Gerard, softly, after a while; 'but need you act it all the rest of your life?'

'Good,' she answered. 'I can't prepare these things that I want to say. Have patience while I explain. Do—my master!' It was beseeching, yet peremptory. Then she began once more, 'My life? First, I have done with Mr Harland. He has done with me. What do I want? You ask me that, Gerard; and your eyes are full of sorrow. I want to be an artist, to act in your plays, under your direction. Let me go where you are going. I will be neither expense nor trouble to you.'

'For God's sake don't talk like that,' answered the musician, greatly distressed. 'Trouble? Expense? I am thinking of your name and fame.'

She blew them from her lips, while he spoke, with a fine gesture. 'I must buy my life with name and fame. Don't think of me. Unless I break with Mr Harland in this way, the years stretch out—a prison into which I

will not go down. I ask no love, Gerard. If I were a man I could go with you. Must I live wretched—because I am a woman?'

He could not talk of the world, or the world's judgment; he despised it. But in the whirlwind of this debate he kept whispering to himself, 'The price—the price—she does not know the price. Dare I tell her what it will cost me?' And he did not dare. One opening in the fog there seemed to be; he made for it.

'I have no control over my plays now. It has passed to Lord Wootton.'

'It has done no such thing,' she answered hotly. 'The bargain you made *they* have not kept. These representations are part of the action of a syndicate.'

'What?' he exclaimed, leaping back when he heard the hideous sound; 'a syndicate? You can prove it?'

Marian's eyes shot scornful fire. 'Mr Harland does not trust me; but he does my cousin Charlie. And Charlie gave me these papers. They contain the whole arrangement in duplicate which is to make of you a market article. Take them; and accept Mr Hendrik Henshaw's gift in Chicago. It *was* he that offered you those terms. You are free as air. Will you leave me in prison?'

Gerard walked to and fro, the whole length of the Abbey, like a man in a fever. He glanced at the documents which he held, but could make no sense of them. 'Leave you?' he said at last, breaking from his meditation with a violent effort. 'Marian, will you take me instead of that—that mean scoundrel? Say the word.'

She smiled. 'I don't know. Give me time. It is too much—Master! Let us keep to the First Act. I am your pupil as yet—only your pupil.' She had put aside a temptation that flung over the Abbey ruins a flame and a magic light, dazzling her eyes. It went out; she was calm now. And he felt that she argued more wisely than he.

'I will engage your berth in the *Golden Fleece*,' he

said as steadily as the current of emotion would let him. 'What name?'

'Marian Greystoke, spinster,' she replied, with a touch of playful sadness.

'Be at Euston'—he told her the hour—'on Wednesday week. The train reaches Liverpool at a quarter to ten o'clock by which we travel. The *Golden Fleece* starts at midnight.'

He left her and carried the papers openly in his hand up to Lord Wootton's. Marian, contemplating the sunset and shedding no tear, went with that sinking light across the Western Ocean, and in spirit was already a free woman.

She spoke the words over and over again to herself as in a musical refrain. 'A free woman!' Freedom was all she craved. Once on board the *Golden Fleece*, it would be hers; and who could take it from her?'

In a week the prison would be left behind.

The light of a dull October day was already 'between dog and wolf,' an uncertain grey dimness, when Mrs Harland's cab drove up to Euston. It wanted some little of half-past five, when the train would start. Her travelling impediments were not such as she had formerly taken on her journeys; and in a dark veil and a dress not conspicuous, Marian would have passed without observation by the side of many of her friends. 'Friends?' she thought in a musing but not melancholy dialogue which had been going on within ever since she bade farewell to Wynflete. 'Had I any except Letitia and Miss Raby? My friends are those I am meeting, not those I leave.' She did not hesitate; neither was she unhappy, or even much excited. Lucas had stayed in the North; Letitia was paying a visit to some house where spiritual topics would be discussed and *séances* held. On so clear a stage, Marian could act as if alone. She had no agonising scenes to go through, no oversight to fear, and she went from Fenimore Place, in the busy London afternoon, with many eyes upon her, yet in a solitude at the other end of

which Gerard was beckoning, like Virgil in the Dantean pilgrimage. As the door closed and she drove away, a burden of useless blood-besprent wealth seemed to drop from her shoulders. Two visions, and two only, followed her as far as the threshold. Above, in a room ever locked and guarded, she saw a child's face, framed in yellow curls, lying on the crimson shroud; and near the door, in shadow, a woman crouched down, whose butterfly wings were broken as she cowered furtively in the dancer's spangled sadness. That was all. Neither of those pictures had any charm to arrest Marian Greystoke. They sent her forth, upon unknown ways and across the Ocean; they bore witness against a life—any life, hers or theirs—rooted in falsehood. If they did not bless, yet in the sight of them was no banning.

And her master, moving restlessly up and down the wide platform, under the roof of smoked and dusty glass, took her hands again, led her to the compartment which had been reserved, and went away, businesslike, to see after the luggage. There were lights all over the station, blotted with fog, sulkily glimmering, tired of the long hours. A crowd shifting from carriage to carriage, eager but not observant, made the solitude more intense for Marian as she sat, drawn back in the carriage, and looked on the moving figures, now rapidly growing so unreal. She made no effort to think; she had done with it all. When would the train start?

Closing her eyes, she could have fallen into a light sleep, and had perhaps dozed, when voices at the door of the compartment awakened her. The musician was standing on the platform, holding the carriage door open. Another man had apparently just come up, and was greeting him in cheery tones, which it did not take Marian long to recognise. Gerard himself stood mute.

'You did not expect to see me here this evening,' said his companion, 'nor was I sure of coming. Lucky, isn't it? Conrad Henle told me your train. Where I am flying to now? I am flying home, Gerard—"as doves to their windows." On my way to our house near that unpronounceable Welsh town. The Welsh say they

can't manage our names either. But surely Monte Vergine is not so bad a mouthful as Llanferfechan! So glad to get away from London; gladder still to share the journey with you. This your carriage? First class, though; we monks always travel third. You shall pay the difference.'

'The carriage is reserved,' said his brother, gravely, as Rudolph ended this little speech. They looked at one another in a curious questioning fashion, and were silent; but Rudolph, though his eyes wore a troubled expression, had to bite his lips in order to keep down the smile which would come.

Marian stood up from her seat and appeared in the doorway. 'There is room for you, Father Rudolph,' she said, putting out her hand. The light which peered beneath her black veil could detect no colour in those features; but she neither shook nor trembled.

Rudolph, taking the hand for an instant, bowed over it. 'Am I *de trop?*' he said pleasantly. 'It is a corridor train. When you have had enough of me, I can move into another compartment. But please let me come in now.'

He showed so little surprise—or rather, none at all—but a man of the world does not show surprise. He did not even name Mrs Harland. Yet her inward sky was darkening with a cloud or two. She would have chosen to travel without Father Rudolph. On the other hand, his presence took from this journey the air of an elopement, which it never was intended to be, although men, and especially women, would so construe it.

'Do come in,' she said, with a self-possession equal to his own. Gerard still said nothing. His face was in shadow, its workings not visible from where Marian stood. The whistle sounded; the train began to move. Gerard sprang in and flung himself into a corner, away from the light. Since Rudolph had come on the scene, neither word nor glance had been exchanged between the other two.

For at least half an hour they sat in perfect silence. The train was now moving into a thick darkness, and they seemed—it was so still, except for the perpetual

rushing sound outside—to have it all to themselves. The lights glowed above them and were reflected in the glass of the windows, betokening a rare seclusion, as of some planet speeding along in empty space, fraught with its own burden, and quite solitary.

'Are you taking a special journey into Wales?' at length said Marian, who was sitting opposite Father Rudolph. 'I see you no longer wear your white habit.'

'Not in the train, and seldom out of doors, since I came to our London monastery. Would be nicer if we did, don't you think? Why should religion and dark tints go together?'

'They always have, in my remembrance,' said Marian.

The monk smiled. 'You were asking about my journey. Yes, it is an occasion. I go into retreat to-morrow. It is the time at Monte Vergine. Such a beautiful place—among hills, with a valley in front, the sea beyond.'

'I shall have enough of the sea,' replied Marian, looking straight across at him; 'I am going to America.'

Gerard moved in his corner, glanced at her, and nodded approvingly. That was right; run up the flag to the masthead, show a bold spirit.

'I know,' answered Rudolph, gently.

'How did you know?' she asked. 'The hundred eyes of Mr Henle saw that too?'

'They saw it. Other eyes saw it. My dear lady, we live in glass houses now.'

'What then, would you advise concealment, Father Rudolph?' with great disdain in her expression.

'Not I. The thing that ought to be done requires no concealment. The thing that ought not—? Judge for yourself what I think.'

'And this thing which I am doing? I, not your brother—it is my own choice.'

Father Rudolph looked at her wistfully, and did not answer in a moment. He turned his eyes to the lights gleaming in another carriage, as they sped onward, the ghostly reflection of this in which they were seated.

'We three are alone in the world,' he began at length, his voice trembling. 'Do you remember the boat, the rocks, the rescue, that other time?'

'I remember. Your brother saved me then,' said she, trembling also, moved by his evident kindness.

'He did. Don't deny it, Gerard. Now, Mrs Harland -Marian—I want *you* to save him.'

The musician leaned forward from his seat.

'Rudolph, I didn't ask you into this carriage. My affairs are my own. We have never quarrelled—but—take care we don't. You talk of my saving her. Is it generous? Go into some other compartment—now do go—and leave us.'

'Ah, what a child the artist is!' said his brother, smiling at him. 'You fancy, and I daresay Mrs Harland fancies, that what you are doing concerns none but your two selves. In her it is devotion, in you enthusiasm. Won't you let me say how it strikes a third? I appeal to you, Marian. Do I seem your enemy? Am I talking texts—platitudes?' He was collected enough, yet his heart spoke to theirs.

'You shall say everything,' replied Marian. 'But first understand. That I am leaving Mr Harland, you see. And without his knowledge. I will never go back to him. What have I asked of Gerard? To elope? The word is out; an ugly word. I shall hear it all round me wherever I go. But I have not asked him to elope. My purpose holds to live the life of an actress and a singer, for which Nature intended me. Gerard is letting me come with him as a pupil, not taking another man's wife. Do you doubt me, Father Rudolph?'

'I have been too long in the world to doubt the extent, the infinitude, of a woman's devotion.'

'Thank you,' said Marian, grasping his hand. 'What more have you to say?'

'Only this. You give Gerard the best you have—yourself. He is worthy of it. My brother has the tenderest heart I know—he never did anything base. He thanks you. I thank you, too.'

'Why, old fellow,' exclaimed the musician, rising

and taking him by the shoulder, 'what a trump you are! I thought you were going to sermonise.'

They were all three happy for a moment. Rudolph began again.

'You abound in love, Marian; I saw that long ago. If you love Gerard—what a foolish "if"!—tell me, which is the way to prove it? Look on a few months. You are in New York. The journals publish columns of lies and a grain of truth. Mr Harland gets his decree *Nisi*, his rule absolute. Marian Greystoke is a free woman—'

'And Gerard Elven marries her if she will take him,' cries the musician; but the rushing of the train damps his voice, which does not travel outside the carriage.

'It would be so—yes, spite of your devotion, or because of it, my dear lady, so would the story end. Is it a good ending?'

All the truthfulness of Marian's character, as a woman and an artist, came to the rescue now. She could not tell a lie, even to win Gerard.

'I used not to think so,' was her brave confession, 'but, Father Rudolph, isn't life too hard for us? What else can I do? Gerard,' turning to him suddenly, 'am I spoiling your happiness, your reputation—your art?'

The musician stood up again. 'Have I uttered a sentence, Marian, to turn you back? Decide; but bear in mind that I am simply in your power—and I like it.'

He was passing into the corridor, but Rudolph held him, and made him sit down. 'First listen,' he said; 'I had nearly missed the train. You wish I had, *fratel mio!* No, no; these things are willed above our heads. I was attending a man in the hospital—a decent mechanic once, he told me, but dying without friends, home or money. "How did you come to this?" I asked him. "My wife," said he; "I suppose we didn't suit. She went off with a mate of mine—curly-haired, blue-eyed chap—left our three children at the baby-nurse's; and they never set eyes on her again. Home without

mother went to rack and ruin. Children—poor little kids—died—consumption, scrofula, starvation—it was the best they could do. And, you know, Father," said the man, raising himself in his bed, "even that I shouldn't a minded, in a way, but Jessie got no good out of it either. She picked out the wrong man; he served her like a dog, then pitched her into the street." I asked him if he had taken her back again. "How could I?" said he. "We weren't a match. She'd have walked away after a week. No, I didn't try. No use." Then, to my question, "Did you see your wife ever?" he answered wearily, "Once I thought I saw someone like her standing about, under a lamp, at nightfall. But I wouldn't go up to her. She looked miserable. I know what she was waiting for. They all come to it, pretty much."'

'I think you presume on your cloth, Rudolph,' said his brother, in hot indignation.

'Do I?' asked the monk, not of him, but of the woman, who sat as if struck by a flight of stinging insects, and called to mind the nights of old—one night when she, too, was walking the London streets.

'You mean that I am lessening the power of goodness, helping the evil?' she answered steadily, as though an argument were debated within her, and these its echoes.

'Ah, who am I to talk to you of goodness?' cried Rudolph Elven. 'I do mean that. I come into the prisoner's dock and bear witness against myself. Am I free from blood? This right hand,' lifting it towards the light, 'has murdered a man. Murdered, because I would not own the law you are resolved on breaking. Gerard knows half the story; no man living except me knows it all. I was taught, with worse than thorns of the wilderness and briars, how awful a thing it is to break that law.'

'You did break it?' said Gerard in amaze. 'I would not permit the proudest Prince in Europe to say so before me. You—the Princess Helen—that gossip was true?'

Rudolph bowed his head, and again silence fell; but when he raised his eyes they were brimming over. 'I thought, I acted, as young men do; I bought my pleasure, and made others pay for it.'

'The Prince fell by your hand, but in an honourable combat,' insisted Gerard.

'Honourable? And who forced him to fight? No, Gerard, the stain went deeper. I had wronged him; for that I murdered him. It's the world's way. Where does it lead to?'

'But Helen would have been happy at Rosenberg. Why did you take fright before a voice, instead of marrying her? Rudolph, wasn't that the crime?'

'Hush! don't talk words that others are listening to in whom you have no belief.'

'What others?' asked Marian. 'Spirits? Do you agree with Miss Harland?'

'I know no more than this,' answered Rudolph, 'the crime which I committed took to itself hands and feet; a voice was given it, a shape so dreadful that Helen, though a light-minded Parisienne, died—oh, how can I tell you what I saw, and the condition in which I saw her! You have acted our play,' he went on after a while, mastering his agitation; 'it was written for a purpose known to me, undreamt of by Gerard—he was my telephone,' said the monk, his lips softening, 'weren't you, *fratel mio?* but a living instrument. I didn't recognise my accents in the music; yet the message was, I thought, given. Love triumphs—Heaven itself is not too large a price. Helen—I can speak the name at last, after years—she believed as I did. And—'

'Don't tell us if it hurts you,' said Marian; 'it can never change my mind.'

'Hear what followed. Until "*Istar*" was rehearsed at Rosenberg, Helen, full of strange fears, subject to hysteria, heard no whisperings from—let us call it the unknown. She was present whenever we gave one of our dramas; a cloud went up with it, and she began to feel the thick darkness which physicians term melancholia without illusions. "*The Descent of*

Istar" changed that into a phantom always more and more palpable. You ask me how? I am loth to say it, but I must. The body of Adonis lying wounded on his couch of asphodel turned to the body of Prince Hercules, and his wife saw the blood which I had made to flow.'

This new interpretation of what Gerard once related was horrible to Marian.

'Did she guess?—had she been told that *you* were the man?'

Rudolph answered eagerly, 'Not then, nor during the weeks that followed. She kept no secret from me. I counselled our marriage in private, to which Helen gave her consent. That much you were informed of, Gerard,' to his brother, almost as expectant as Marian, while the narrative went on to the close. 'We gave "*Istar*" only once; I dared not allow the impression to be repeated. In a few days the wedding would have come off. But Helen's awful guest would not leave her. The night before the marriage, in a storm that filled Rosenberg with lightning, she saw the Prince by her bedside, still on the bier, still wounded. Now he spoke. I have never told mortal the words that Helen reported to me.'

'But you are going to tell them here, in this carriage, while the night is upon us?' said Marian.

'You, Mrs Harland, have a claim to know them. So has Gerard. Have you ever heard of that old custom, superstition, of laying a naked sword between the bride and bridegroom? It figures in many a legend.'

'Yes, I know it well. Go on.'

'The thing, whatever it was, that haunted the Princess, lifted itself from the bier, and said distinctly, "Between bride and bridegroom not a sword, but a corpse." "Not a sword, but a corpse," it reiterated during the hours of that unspeakable night. As soon as Helen ventured to stir from her trance of terror, she sent for me, and charged me with her husband's death. I made no reply, none was possible. With seeing eyes she never beheld me again. The next time I was

within the walls of the Castle—in my habit as a monk —I knew her; but she did not know me. The law which we broke was mightily avenged.

Gerard rose abruptly and passed into the corridor. His irregular step was heard outside, while the train swayed to and fro. A long spell, as of sleep—but who could sleep after such a narration?—made the whole dreamlike, and Rudolph began, timidly, to address Marian once more.

'The saddest thing about genius—it can so seldom live up to its own message. If I ever had any, consider the shame of my past. Gerard bears an untarnished name. I know you would be sorry, did your act leave him visible to those that come after us, a starry son of Heaven, but with a cancer at his heart. Do not throw into his life this bloody corpse.'

'Mr Harland would not challenge him; Englishmen have given up fighting duels.'

'But it was I that made the Prince challenge me. I meant—and I have good reason to suppose—that unless you return to your husband he will be ruined. This kind of ruin brings suicide.'

She shook her head incredulously. 'I can't go back; Lucas, with his easy-going conscience, is not the man to commit suicide. I will not go back. Why should I? He is not attached to me. He has broken the marriage vow. Is there a freedom for men and none for women?' Her anger was extreme; nothing would move her from it. Rudolph appealed to her generosity, her wedded promise, in vain.

The darkness began to be pierced with lights. They were nearing Liverpool. Gerard's step continued outside. 'Call your brother in,' said Marian, when the talk was ended.

'Be merciful to him,' Rudolph still entreated. Her eyes blazed.

'I have made up my mind, Gerard,' was the sentence which struck upon his impatient ear. 'You shall not be dishonoured by me. But I keep the resolution I have sworn, never to see Mr Harland again.'

'What will you do?' asked the musician, absently.

'I have a favour to ask. Stay on this side until I am in New York. I will sail to-night, and go alone. You may hear of me again; but I release you from your engagement, so far as it was one. No, we have argued enough. It shall never be said that Marian Greystoke clouded your fame.' Her eyes smarted; not a tear fell from them. Rudolph, with consummate good sense, held his tongue. The balance was descending of itself on the side where he had weighted it. A critical moment, nevertheless.

And the train had stopped, passengers were alighting, the gas-jets of Lime Street Station showed a range of cabs, and in front, through the open doors, Liverpool was before them. Gerard helped Marian down, went after the luggage, returned, and stood voiceless by her side. Rudolph hailed one of the cabs.

'You must not come,' she said with decision. 'Tell the man where he is to go.' Gerard kept her hand fast. 'I have betrayed you,' he faltered. 'Say we shall meet in New York?'

'Not there, nor anywhere. Quick, please; I must not be late.'

Their hands dropped. He gave the directions. And in a few moments the roar of the Liverpool streets had swallowed up Marian Greystoke.

Had anyone been looking on, he would have imagined this energetic figure of a man was about to be stricken with paralysis. Gerard leaned heavily on his brother, and at length went reeling against the line of carriages, hardly saved by Rudolph from a dangerous fall. He was incapable of speech.

The monk, though himself shaken, exhibited more composure. He beckoned to one of the railway men, and ordered some spirits, which were brought from the restaurant a few yards distant. Gerard took them down at a gulp. The luggage, bearing its labels for New York, lay scattered on the platform. Trains whirled in and out; the station was crowded, an immense commo-

tion went on, and Gerard, as unconscious as a child, heard it afar—he was following Marian to the steamer in his wild thoughts.

'You must put yourself under my care,' said Rudolph, seeing he did not move. 'Come to Monte Vergine. It is out of the world. You can rest there as long as you choose.'

'Are you going to Monte Vergine?' asked his brother, looking at him with a vacant eye.

'To be sure. I told you at Euston.'

'Take me with you,' he said helplessly. 'When do you start?' The train was drawn up on another platform.

'Now,' answered Rudolph, 'come at once. We shall be there by twelve.'

At twelve the *Golden Fleece* sailed down the Mersey with Marian on board.

BOOK IV

CYPRIAN AND JUSTINA

'Thy spell is purity; thy sword is prayer;
See, Love the great enchanter, vanquished lies,
His splendours pale beneath thy starry eyes,
The roses, in that garland he did wear,
Have shed their blossoms in the burning air
Of so divine an ecstasy; but thou
Hast lilies for the shading of thy brow,
Such as in Heaven the Virgin Martyrs bear.

Rise, and with thee let Cyprian take his flight,
The lost magician, as thou lead'st along,
Since Love, the earth-born, that was wont to smite
His thousands, now himself lies smitten among
The falling temples, and his magic might
Hath yielded to the glory of thy song.'

CHAPTER XXIII

PILGRIMS OF THE UNKNOWN

AWAY from the fog, the muffled lights, the background of solid darkness—in which London, Fenimore Place, the library with its fatal secret door, the chamber of the crimson shroud, the drawing-room all ebony and lacquer, tenanted by mesmeric enchantments, lay hidden—a past that had gone in one violent sweep, and its whole scaffolding with it. Away from the Abbey ruins by the cold Northern sea; from the monks' chapter-room turned to a stage; from Lebanon and the purple stream, and from dead Adonis. Away, too, from the brazen tower of Rylsford, from its walls dark with undeciphered imagery, its handwriting, *Mene*, *Tekel*, *Upharsin*, on the tablets of childhood, its waste of sorrow and its spectres, evoked by a dismal creed. Away from all this, but whither? Into the unknown; across a great water ploughed by generations fleeing, as Marian Greystoke fled, from their own thoughts and a world unendurable. We wretched mortals fear that which we have not seen; but a greater fear may drive us into its arms. The worst of this new darkness can surely be no more than death. Into it, then, and take your chance.

For thirty hours Marian, half dead, lay in her berth—the narrow place where she hardly dreamt, and did but listen to the rushing sound, a continuation of that tempest which had brought her on its wings through the night from Euston. It was the same strait compartment, panelled, upholstered in velvet, the electric lamp always burning; but she was alone. The companions of her journey had melted like all else. Every

throb of the screw was taking her further from them. No food touched; not a cup of water now was palatable; she lay quite still, without sense or motion, while the hours foamed by her in a white stream, felt rather than adverted to—an obscure something of the mind which is torpid, refusing apprehension. She was neither sad nor glad. If sickness would keep away, to be so passive, undisturbed, a part of the moving vessel that carried her along, was enough. Once and again some voice inside the door spoke, and she wished it would be silent. She wanted nothing—oh, nothing; she put to-morrow away at arm's length. In her slight fitful dreams an outline came and went, uncertain of what or of whom. She felt grateful to the Power that left her in this solitude—but all was the merest shadow of real things; her feeling was a shadow. The moods and tenses of existence had lapsed into a present so colourless that death hung over the stream in a mist which answered its grey with grey. And this half-sleep was all.

But after thirty hours it lifted—the sombre mist. To-morrow had arrived. A brilliant blue entering at the porthole summoned her, and she rose, and dressing slowly in her widow's weeds—for as such did she regard them—Marian saw in the swinging-glass a countenance she had never thought to see there—ashy pale, with quenched eyeballs. She did not recognise what an affecting image of sorrow looked out thence. Others would notice it and the elegance of her sables and her exquisite lace—an air of supreme distinction. The past had showered upon her this dew of sorrow; there was nothing old or faded in her bearing, only an austere softness, composed of regret and beauty on which lay a cloud.

Moving with difficulty through the narrow ways and up the staircase which faced the large dining saloon, she came upon deck to receive a dazzling light all round from the morning and the white ship, so utterly clean in its fresh paint. But there was shade enough to sit and watch the waters, not seeing the sun where it

mounted royally and cast long golden shafts before it. The steward brought her some food; she thanked him. It was the first human word she had spoken since quitting the brothers at Lime Street. Even that brief sentence did her the good which always come of simple fellowship—the whole world is kin; we feel it most in our trouble. Two or three little children were chasing one another about the deck and in and out of the benches. A fox terrier, with its white paws on the edge of Marian's dress, sat up and begged for a morsel of chicken. Abaft, several boys, in their shirt sleeves, were pitching quoits. And round and round the deck paced groups of passengers, enjoying the sun, the air, the hurrying blue water with its fresh-churned foam.

Low on the skyline hung a palace of silver, clouds that varied in depth like fleeces thrown carelessly down, but shaped and hollowed, and cast into relief by a wind which played at being architect, altering its plan delightedly, and blowing portions of the vapour into the sunshine, where they flamed up in yellow. Troops of gulls flashed hither and thither—delicious gleams of cool shining white. No suggestion of land was in the prospect; and Marian, who had never sailed so far out, gained an impression of depth and distance which made the Atlantic a wall of dark azure, built between the old world and the new. Their ship was a flying rainbow—a drawbridge they could pull up after them; and the Ocean a moat, beyond which the immense Continent held out its lantern over the waves. She rejoiced that they were rushing at this headlong speed; the movement took hold of her; she raced with it instead of being passively carried on like dead merchandise. The beautiful evanescent foam, on which her eyes kept looking, revived her. She tasted it with her lips; there was great peace also in the circles of the sea, formed and disappearing incessantly, while the boat travelled on in a line which was ever defining them. This lonely thing seemed to rule the Ocean.

'Have you ever been to America?' asked a voice at her elbow which made her turn round. She was

not startled; convalescence had still to quicken her feelings, then so subdued. The speaker had been observing her a little while; the voice was low and timid. Marian saw close by, bending somewhat down, a woman whose attire was well worn but not unbecoming; terra-cotta relieved in blue, which went with an olive complexion — or should one call it amber? — magnificent black hair, curled and lustrous on the forehead; eyes as large as brilliant, the colour of the sea which was flowing by. They had a strangely fatigued look in them. And so had the bending figure. It was a foreign accent, making so much more of the vowels than English women, with their half-shut lips, are accustomed to do. An Italian, certainly, and not young.

'Never,' replied Miss Greystoke—by which name we must call her in the days to come—'have you?' Her own speech was in a quiet key, and she smiled at the other woman, who seemed to want encouragement. The Italian made a gesture of assent and deprecation.

'I have been there one time; it is years; they say that America is changed. I am not the same myself, it is true,' with the affectionate smile which asks one to agree and be kind to the speaker. 'I go now to country unknown. But why not? Would the people believe I was Giulia Cornaro that they adored, that they buried in flowers, that they killed one another to hear sing?'

'Giulia—Giulia Cornaro?' said Marian, examining the worn face. 'Surely I know your name. You were a cantatrice.'

'You say truly; I was. A long time since then, you would say,' and she wiped away a tear which had fallen. 'But I may be again what I was. Mr Ralston has sent for me—the great Signor Ralston who has theatres in Nuova York, in Chicago, where know I? When I considered you, Signora, I said to myself, she is an artiste; perhaps she could tell me what America resembles now? Are not you also an actress?'

Giulia sat down by her side, laying a long hand, with fingers drawn out, on Marian's sleeve. It was the most

unexpected and undesigned compliment; with a lurking sense of irony in it, due to the Mrs Harland, upon whose features Miss Greystoke was a mask.

'I have acted, and I mean to act,' she said, with more decision in her tone. 'Unfortunately, I am not engaged by Mr Ralston or anyone else. I know nothing of America, except that it is not Europe.'

'And that is enough! I like not Europe myself. Italy is my land—Venice. Everywhere that is not Italy is exile. You would not feel so, you are English.'

'Not so English—or, perhaps, I am really English enough to love your Italy. I spent my'—'my honeymoon,' poor Marian was on the edge of saying, but remembered she was now Miss Greystoke. 'I travelled once to see the pictures at Florence, and Rome, and the Bay of Naples. We did not see Venice.'

The living waters which flew by them, and the easy motion, threw the women into a silent mood; nothing is so natural on board an Ocean-going steamer as to sit still, hardly conscious of one's thoughts. In Marian's fancy the question whether she were English had taken her back to the days when she read of Ilsamin and the Hadji Hussein; the East with its perfumes, colours, strange adventures, took hold of her mightily, even while she set her face to the lands in which commerce and the modern spirit reigned. Below, in her cabin, locked up, was the manuscript of General Louis, with its embroidered kerchief still smelling of musk. She would go over it quietly again. The old, old feeling of a resemblance between herself and the slave girl—both sold in the market of women—was awake within. Her owner was not dead; he might still pursue after his fugitive. Suddenly she asked Giulia, 'How came you to imagine me an actress? You never saw me before?'

Madame Cornaro laughed a gentle little laugh that showed the pleasantest range of teeth. 'One cannot mistake oneself, if one is like me, a teacher of the stage. And see this,' she held up a printed paper, 'the names of the passengers. At dinner they tell me there

are people of the theatre on board. Your name is here. Show me.'

It was there, 'Miss Marian Greystoke,' in print—every letter of it. Marian felt her eyes blink in the fierce light. To be advertised before this large company! He, Gerard, was the man that had done it. After all, why not? She had to make the plunge. 'That is my name,' she answered, pointing it out.

'I say to myself,' continued the Italian, 'Is the Signora perhaps invited by Mr Ralston, as I? Many women are here; no actress; they know not how to walk, to sit, to open their mouths, to use their cold, English eyes. What actress among these? A little ago, you did walk, a few steps only. I was observing how you sat here—the pose, the turn of head, shoulders, and the voice.' And this hard, sibilant English fell from Giulia's lips with a child-like clearness, the hissing letters damped or kept down. 'You did say four words, "Thank you very much;" and then, "If you please," to the steward. Bastava! you were my actress.'

Marian put out her hand. 'How kind of you to think it, Signora! I have not acted as a professional. I never may get the chance. But you could ask Mr Ralston to see me in New York, couldn't you? Not as a rival, you know,' with her melancholy smile, as she watched Giulia's countenance fall.

'Ah, when I was of your age,' replied the cantatrice, if I held up my finger to an impresario, he was kneeling to me as a saint. Now it is different. Mr Ralston sends for me. Revive the Italian Opera, he says—Lucia, Zerlina—but how if the Americani do not listen any more? He will send me back. I would speak for you, Signora, none the less. But managers—brutes—what care they for us? Or they care too much, that is still worse.'

She was becoming animated, with a passion that relieved itself in large and graceful gesture. Attitude, expression, were not a foreign language this woman had once had to learn; they came by instinct.

'Mr Ralston will have neither eyes nor ears,' said

Marian, 'if he cannot see when a finished actress comes before him.'

'Finished, indeed! I know, you do compliment me. I can move, I can recite—not sing as formerly, my organ is fatigued; a fever, and I lost the singing voice, the high and the low notes. Nor do I please now. Morosini used to say, "Giulietta, figlia mia, we are done, we Italians. Where is our science, our *serietá?* We have passion; it is too little. The Germans have no passion, but they do without. Go, go, you are a hundred years old." It was true.'

'But I had a master named Morosini,' cried Marian. 'Was he yours? I took lessons from him. Tell me all about him.'

'I cannot. He taught me in Venice, when I was a *ragazza*—an infant—of thirteen. After, he and I were in Milan, Paris, London. He fell in love—a real tragedy—a fury of loving—all as so much vapour; it went like that'—pointing to the foam which the wind swept away into the blue water. 'I foretold him it would; he was sixty, she twenty. Not, indeed, *she* sent him away; but it was all the same. Do not ask me to tell you. Talk rather of Mr Ralston.'

But they talked no more then. Her old music master's tragedy, adding another page to the volume, blotted with tears and stained with crimson, in which man writes of himself and his doings, could not affect Marian. The long day in hospital had ended by numbing her senses—one more sick bed left no impression; the world was a lazzaretto. And little by little her own story took a finished form—beginning and middle, entanglement and catastrophe. She sat in the shade of the upper deck, moving as the sun moved, and drew apart, a stranger, from the life she had lived to this day, and let it tell its own tale. The never-resting ship made a secret lodge, whence, looking out, she contemplated the action, lifted like a cloud, above the waves. These, then, were the eternal things that she was seeing—the sky, an infinite hollowness, blue in its awful depths; the waters rolling beneath sun and moon; the hidden stars, always

shining, disdainful of human eyes; the storms that rose and fell. We have nothing to call ours, she thought, save the momentary vision, and a sorrow that will not pass. She reckoned up all that had been her own. Some beauty, a little love, the power of dramatising—oh, what a child's play!—and with all those thousands no means to purchase content. Who was contented? Miss Raby—there was something in her profession that did bring peace. Anyone besides? She glanced at Father Rudolph. And then, by an association of ideas too subtle for her disentangling, the name of Louis Greystoke surged up in her memory.

What was the bond which united men so unlike? Rudolph called himself a criminal; his hands were wet with blood. Nevertheless, he believed in a law of repentance; he bowed down to it; he spoke of peace. In that conversation which had sent her alone across the Atlantic, one of his chance words, while Gerard moved up and down in the corridor outside, had been, '*E da Firenze venni a questa pace*'—after the tumult and the agony, peace! Prince Hercules killed in duel, the Princess dying insane, the past a horror—and yet, peace! Could it be? It was; she had seen it. Ah, the Peace! Here was the link between Rudolph and her Persian ancestor, the friend of Karim and Abdullah Abbas. They had some secret, common to them all. It drew her on strangely to search into it. Moreover, when she let her meditations guide her as a child along this path, certain sweet reminiscences went with her. Which were they?—

All kindness done to her and by her, viewed now simply as a thing apart, which she could not spoil, without one atom of self-seeking. The affection which no misunderstanding had clouded, between Marian and her father; Rosie's tender attachment; Harry Oberlin's chivalry; the friendship with Lizzie Raby, with Letitia. These were all good; not even in the presence of the eternal things, silent, inexorable, did they blanche or fade—rather they took on a most touching air, as flowers which have sprung up in dark alleys, and give out a

fragrance when the foot tramples them. Flowers? But they grow in the rude soil, and light comes to paint them delicately. If these might last, 'into some better world—?' Marian found herself shedding tears as soft as dew. The feeling of intense solitude left her.

Then she remembered her own act, that last Wednesday night, in the spectral carriage, darkness at the window, Rudolph pleading. It was right; she would do it again; no stain from her should fall upon Gerard's reputation; but she began to perceive that more than reputation was at stake. There could have been no peace in their lives, except at the cost of blindness, had they broken the law—not man's law, but the law which was one with Nature in its undying beauty, which blazed in the sun, chanted with the sea, went forth on the wings of the wind, glittered in the rainbow and the foam, and was the same for evermore. Scattered, broken thoughts —here a little, and there a little—lines of some Heavenly chorus, heard at intervals and lost again—but the heart slept while they hovered round; the first drops of happiness fell on her lips. Giulia Cornaro, watching, said in her frank Italian speech to herself, 'The Signora is a child; her father has beaten her, and now he forgives her with a kiss.'

The two women sat next to one another at table. In a silent but not insincere way they were growing friendly. Marian had still to awake from her deep experience, which made this world of busy chattering forms, and the continual crowd, appear so unreal. She could not speak little or much; the voices around had a disagreeable sense to her tired feelings; what would she not have given to be somewhere laid in a quiet grave, as an infant that never saw light? The only balm of her wounds was that moment when she remembered Louis Greystoke—him above all. But in considering attentively Giulia's worn features, pity stirred, and she blended this new sentiment with the longing for peace. Yet how impossible to recover the glimpse she had caught of it! 'As for my life,' she muttered, 'I loathe it; I would not live always. Let me alone; my days are

vanity.' Days she must endure, to the end, not shortening them guiltily. Something—she could not tell how—kept her from self-murder. Perhaps it was too easy. Looking over the side, into miles of dark water, she fancied with what swiftness, in the turn of a hand, life and all its troubles might be cast away. Bitterly now she repeated the words, 'A free woman,' under the spell of which her act had been accomplished. Oh, so free! Free to leap down into this Atlantic, beyond the reach of the sun, to lie there in depths on which the whole mighty ocean weighed, her bones whitening, and to be no more.

She was free indeed. The sea called and opened its bosom; the immeasureable solitude put forth its charm. A languor, a home-sickness, unloosed every fibre of resolution as the hours ran across these billows, dancing lightly to mock her downcast thoughts. Madame Cornaro sat a little way off, dumb and sympathetic; she felt, as a woman does often feel rather than understand, that Marian's grief was very great. The relapse into melancholy that did not moan or weep was perplexing, but she had witnessed it in others of the Northern land. English men and women died of a broken heart, in silence; or lived as ghosts, drained of the warm blood once running in their veins. Miss Greystoke, leaning against the side, began to show a parchment-like tinge on her cheek; and her eyes were wild. The father's kiss had been forgotten.

'You are too sad, cara Signora,' she made bold at length to say in her sweet undertones. 'Why look you at the sea always? Here are children playing—pretty English children. Look at them. In my country they would be dressed as angels, and walk in the procession on Festa days. Do you not love them?'

'Too well to look at them,' replied her friend, sighing. 'I had a little sister once—had, not have—you understand.'

'*Poverella!* But she is in Paradise. You ought to be glad. Women have so much trouble. I, too, Signora, have a boy, my own, own boy. He is called Zorzi

—Georgie in your language. He goes to school; he is clever. It is for his sake I am crossing the sea.'

'But you do not bring him with you?'

'No, Signora; he is too young—twelve. And I do not stay in America, but for one season at most. I had not the money to pay his passage. I think of him every minute. I see him, and he talks to me in my dreams. Have you left anyone you love like that?'

'I have left everyone,' said Marian, dejectedly.

'Ah, do not fear. They will come again. You have gifts, how many? If you can guard yourself from—from men, you will be happy and famous. Do not give up your courage. Signora, trust me as you would a sister. I am alone, except I have Zorzi—the *cherubino!* Let not the water fascinate you. I was near drowning myself in a fearful hour, but I did it not! "*La sete della morte;*" if you speak Italian, you will know what it means. You are thirsty; you would drink of the cup. Drink not; soon you will rejoice to be so brave.'

The forlorn woman! She brought some comfort to one who had not gone so many years on this desolate path. They clasped hands. 'You have your child,' said Marian. 'It was not the same case,' she added to herself.

'Where shall you be staying in New York?' she asked after a while, abruptly turning the conversation. Giulia gave her an address—one of the second-class hotels to which Mr Ralston had directed her; we will call it the Delaware House.

'I could stay there too, I suppose,' observed Marian, reflecting how strange it was, after being cared for as if the world were a palace and she its queen, to be thinking what money she had brought with her. As little as possible, considering these uncertainties. Lucas Harland could not say she had plundered him. What salary had he had given for the performance of '*Istar*'? she enquired disdainfully.

Giulia pressed her to stay at the Delaware House, and it was agreed upon. 'Now come and let us make music in the ladies' drawing-room, where there is a

beautiful piano,' said the Venetian. 'It will drive away the demon.'

'I will play while you sing; I cannot do more,' was the reply. But Marian's dejection, now at its lowest point, was leading to a second and emphatic reassertion of the claims of life. Madame Cornaro selected, with kindly judgment, from the scores which she had with her, music of a tempered, almost severe key—old chants belonging to the early eighteenth century, of which her masters knew the secret; nor was it very difficult to Marian's practised fingers; while the large character, reminding one of Handel, grave and yet sweet, had in it a majestic sadness, a light untroubled by the modern flush of colour. A small company, drawn from the smoking-room and the deck by these fine chords, came stealing in; they were well-mannered enough to keep silence, and to admire the skill and precision of Madame Giulia without paying compliments to her while she sang

Her voice had lost, as she admitted, the high notes of the register; but she managed what was left of it brilliantly. Marian accompanied well — letting the voice display its whole strength, its refinement, its expression, without any attempt to overpower it by the running harmonies. She had never forgotten Gerard Elven's saying that her execution, though good, was not supreme. On the score of this accomplishment she was modest, knowing that her genius lay elsewhere. But it seemed to her as if acquaintance with music so original as Gerard's had given her an insight beyond Madame Cornaro's. The cantatrice sang with exactness, fervour, decision; the touch that would set all this divinely on fire had passed over it and away, or had never come. Would the New York impresario and his audience perceive what Marian perceived? Had they the new sense? Much depended on it for herself and the good Giulia, whose innocent rival she might prove to be.

Nor did she aim at being anyone's rival. Her mind was made up during the hour they spent together at this

instrument. If a new chapter were opening—and the 'thirst of death,' as Giulia expressed herself, could be overcome—she would fulfil the law that made for peace, for love; the lesson of all she had learnt was echoed in a music bearing on its broad stream a sense of the something which passionate desire could neither give nor equal. Not equal—because passion, though deep, was not high; it vexed and excited—and then, the soul was burnt to ashes, a dead soul, driven by the breeze. Marian saw it all clearly at last. When the singing was over, and the others had slipped away to their cigarettes, their cards, or their novels, she stood up, and taking Giulia in her arms, kissed her on the forehead. 'I am not thirsty now,' she said. The other grasped her meaning, and the dark eyes brightened.

'Is it not better so?' asked Giulia. 'You were dying, *mia cara* for want of love. I am a poor exile; if you could be satisfied with me, I would love you.'

'It is a bargain,' said the English girl; 'but remember, I owe you my life. What do you owe me? The bargain is all on one side.'

'That does not signify,' answered Giulia.

This friendship saved Marian from more than she could have guessed. Seeing her always in Giulia's company, or else alone, other passengers took for granted that she was one of the stage people on board. In this domino she walked to and fro, unquestioned. Whereas, if suspicion had once fixed upon her as a great English lady, travelling without service or society, not even her silence, resolute enough, could have kept some of the women from torturing her. But they did not trouble about the ways of an actress. Marian sat or moved, mostly in the air, still watching the deep, with its black surface yielding now and again a cold steel brilliancy; the wind rushed, the foam flew with it; the throbbing of the engines never grew familiar, could not be forgotten. A feeling there was, too, of hundreds down below, slaves of the screw and the furnace, of hundreds more, at the bottom of those long steep ladders which went out of sight into the

steerage—a city floating on the waves, with all its sorrow, class above class; the rich that sauntered or lounged, owning luxurious cabins on the main deck; the decently dressed middle passengers, from whose faces and garments colour was absent—had they taken a vow to look as well as feel sad?—the sailors who went about, ghosts intent on their particular errands; and, once more, the crowd over whose heads they were all trampling. The *Golden Fleece* carried into mid-ocean, between stars and billows, everything which made life detestable at home—from the woes of the palace to the misery of the workhouse, all was there. A floating prison, most like the earth itself, spinning in empty space!

America, lying in the South, to which they were now turning, cast neither light nor shadow upon her mind. She knew nothing of America; had never framed a picture of it in fancy; nor did she feel drawn to it now. Gerard Elven was her America; he had vanished, the place in her imagination was blank. And as the sea tranquillizes and its waters wash over the past, there is a tendency while one travels with it to muse, to meditate, to face back towards childhood and its old romance. What more natural than that Marian should take her ancestor's *Journal* up again, or read it in an acquiescent yet enlarged temper, knowing for the first time what it truly meant? The interval, since her days in the garret, was a tomb where Rosie lay canonised, or a battle in which her hopes had undergone defeat. The last scene of this tragedy, judging as the world could judge, ought to be suicide, '*La fin est toujours sanglante*'—she had seen those words somewhere. Why did she gaze over the side now, fearless, almost indifferent? How was the fascination quelled?

Day after day she continued the reading of her Eastern volume. Its persons took a solid form once more as she fixed the outlines that, hitherto a part of the dream in which her childhood was spent, had receded, grown pale, and lost their significance, while the drums and trumpets of a deceptive joy beat stormily around her. General Greystoke, the soldier-saint; Abdullah,

the merchant, who had cast away riches, deliberately renouncing them; the Persian hero on a throne, friend to all high contemplations; Ilsamin, sweet and pure amid a world of the corrupt; and Masud, the slave, who died for love—she turned to them with longing, as if they were not far away. Had they strength which they could share?—light from the very tomb? Not once but often the pilgrim, Hadji Hussein, spoke of a path, a journey, which led to happiness. He had gone along its heights and hollows; it was no imagination, he averred, but an experience. With utter certainty the book affirmed, 'He that hath found the way knoweth the secret altogether.'

Had Gerard travelled on this road? Did he know the way? She wondered and she doubted. Fearful passions strove, like the four winds of Heaven, upon that troubled sea which was his soul. The deeps of his music were never wholly tranquil. A brave spirit, ardent, inventive. What would he have said to a distich quoted by Hussein from some ancient singer?—

> 'The loveliest rose climbs towards the light supreme;
> What bloom soever seeketh shade, the rose it is not.'

Which the Hadji went on to interpret of musicians, painters, poets—of nearly all men of renown—whom he beheld in his day running to the shade of court favour, instead of attaining by the works of their hands to union with the Highest. Elven had quitted Kings' houses; he scorned their modern equivalent, popularity; but she never heard him talk of this union. He surely did not believe in it. A more striking verse followed,—

> 'Drink thou the wine of dying to self; from thyself set thyself free.'

There was a terrific self-concentration in genius; that she could affirm, having seen Gerard. But now Marian rebelled against her own thoughts. What cruelty was in them, when, at a signal from her, the man of genius was willing to surrender name and fame, as he had

proved? '*I* ought to drink the wine which drowns one's miserable self; I and not he,' she murmured. But from what cup was it poured out?

By-and-by, in a golden hour, when the Atlantic was aflame at sunset, this other saying caught and fixed her attention. Louis recited from his Persian master's *ghazels*,—

> 'The light of faith makes a new heart: Give up, and to thee it shall be given.'

A word, at the reading of which it seemed to Marian that she had entered on the hidden way. Sunset was transfiguring the ship, lighting it in a glory almost unendurable. With a sudden clear touch the sword of the spirit pierced her marrow. 'Give up, and to thee it shall be given!' She knew the meaning now. 'Give up'—it was not fleeing from sorrow, pain, anguish, burdens heavy to be borne—quite another fleeing—from ourselves, in whom there is no seed of persistence, to that which abides. 'We are travellers,' the book said again; 'since the world passes, pass thou from it.' And, 'There is a goodness that cannot change.' Looking over the leaves of memory, in all those acts which now whispered of peace or hope, she beheld this quality of detachment. 'Ah,' said Marian, laying aside her volume to watch the sun as it went down, 'and a woman ought not to live for herself. I see it all. The "wine of dying to self" is, for her, love that does not count the cost. Give up, and to thee it shall be given.' The sun sank; would it not rise to-morrow?

There comes in the life of every noble spirit a moment when the outer covering is burnt to ashes, and the true self rises up trembling, but resolved to have done with falsehood. We call that moment conversion. It had sounded for Marian Greystoke at the summons of a pure soul, speaking to her out of these pages. She was on 'the path of the Friends.' With quite fresh eyes, not consumed as formerly in vain fires, but feeling a softness in them, she regarded the people who were flitting up and down, herself speechless, but in a mood

of tender sympathy. She made no friends but Giulia. Yet, in the dense crowd she was more at home than she could be in New York; and she underwent a cold shiver at the anticipation of a day that should cast her upon unknown streets. Was it her duty to go back the way she came? For hours and hours the debate continued, and she was still without guidance. As yet, no argument weighed in the balance against her husband's disloyalty. The great change in herself had overlooked and almost forgotten him. But those verses were echoing in her conscience — music that filled it like a shell,—

> 'The loveliest rose climbs towards the light supreme;
> What bloom soever seeketh shade, the rose it is not.'

The voice within spoke to her quietly, not in tempest, as to encourage her steps on the ascending way. Well, she would do what was right. She saw no need of returning to England immediately. Here was Giulia Cornaro, a soul weaker than Marian, clinging to her, and in want of a companion. First, then, to see her safe. Other duties would claim fulfilment when that was done.

A transparently clear morning, and the *Golden Fleece* steamed in its majestic way over long swathes of light into New York Harbour, passing a multitude of craft, innumerable wharves and buildings on which the sun appeared to cast a glittering sheen, vivid and almost disquieting. Beautiful it was, but Marian had scarcely eyes for it all. She felt in her blood a certain exhilaration—the radiant sky, cloudless but throbbing, warmed and stung her, and under the new sensation she was intent upon a vision within—it showed as in a looking-glass another Marian Greystoke—not her who had left Euston a week ago with Gerard Elven. She was studying that woman. In the background she saw the Hadji Hussein and his bride Ilsamin—figures of an ethereal beauty—friends to whom she owed her soul. The revelation of a love so perfect had taken her up into

a world where affection and duty were one. The rest—phantom and imagery. New York or London, what difference did it make? 'I will follow the path,' she said to herself. And to Giulia, who stood there trembling, '*Andiamo*—come, my dear friend. We will conquer the Americans, or at least ourselves. Let us go over the side together.'

CHAPTER XXIV

FUGE, TACE, QUIESCE

GERARD, walking in a dream from the station to the monastery, followed his brother, through a wicket, opening in doors of oak studded with iron nails, and saw in front of them a white figure which held out a lamp as to guide them along the stone cloister. At the end, away in semi-darkness, shone a purple ray. It was the light which burned at all hours before a statue of the Madonna. Broad steps of stone led up to the galleries overhead. An utter stillness held Monte Vergine in its arms; the place was asleep. Through one tall window, as the brothers went up, poured a moonlight so intense that their lamp grew sullen, and out of the pictures hanging on the wall, darted faces, limbs, gesticulations of an enormous power, quickened by the beam which fell across them. It was a large monastery, with many corridors. 'I will show you to your room,' said Rudolph, whispering. 'Would you like anything to eat?'

The musician made no reply. He was haggard and forespent. His brother did not repeat the question, but led him on until they entered a large, airy cell, the floor partly covered with matting, the walls bare, a crucifix over the chimney, which had stone facings and fender; a table and a couple of chairs stood against the window, and a camp bedstead, without curtains, was in the middle, under a heavy beam which supported the ceiling. All was exquisitely clean and white. Gerard threw himself sideways on the bed.

'You may hear the monks reciting their matins,' said Rudolph, in the same undertone. 'See, there is a judas here that you can shut or open. It allows you to look into the choir. But try now to sleep, fratello,' putting a kind hand upon his shoulder. 'In the morning, after mass, I will come to you.'

He went out, softly shutting the door behind him, and Gerard was alone. But still he sat on the bed in a stupor too deep for words or thought. Hours fell into that abyss; the shadow grew dense around him; an astonishment or amaze, the like of which seizes upon the insane after they have broken out into murder, was his only feeling. All the upper reaches of the spirit—fancy, argument, ordered reasoning—were drowned in the flood that had come down out of a black thunderspout, against which no faculty could hold its own. In the temperament of the artist an immense variation is always possible from a hundred degrees above boiling-point to far below zero. Gerard was now plunged headlong into Arctic cold. He felt as little as one in a swoon. There was a vague sense of power gone from him, a pressure on the brain, as well as the warning that by-and-by he must suffer—when the day broke, when he should be moving, and others would come near him. The heart seemed sad for itself; he was no longer a sovereign individual consciousness, but a bundle of sensations, and he watched them languidly. Not for the first time he had lived with these ghosts; they rose up silently, old acquaintances, whom he could not send away.

The lamp flickered and went out. Still he sat there. More time passed, which he could not reckon. A sound, at once low and regular, beat against the judas window on his left hand, indistinguishable but continuous. It called him to open the shutter, and, as he did so, a ray darted into the room. Following its guidance, he looked over into a chancel, carved in fine white stone, windows opposite beautifully traced, which in the day would exhibit their colours and

legends. Over against him, in the stalls, were seated figures, their habits cutting the gloom with a strange pallor, themselves like spectres that had found a voice at midnight. Others, on the side which he could not see—beneath him—were answering these. A recitative on one note, swift, colourless, slightly nasal; he could imagine how it threw the monks into a state of contemplation where each pursued his own thoughts. On Gerard, as he listened, the effect was that of opium; it weighed him down, but stilled the fluttering heart. Except that the words were Latin, he knew not how the service went. Before it ended, he had fallen on his bed asleep.

The morning woke him, at first, as he thought, in the room which he had long occupied at Wynflete Abbey. When his eyes unclosed, he saw overhead the ceiling of that chamber and the rich tapestry on its walls. But in a moment or two he recognised where he was—at Monte Vergine, not at Wynflete. There was a bath in the room. He undressed, gave himself a douche of the cold spring water, and feeling more of a man now, stood in consideration before the crucifix until his brother came in. It was remarkable. As long as he kept his eyes on that suffering figure, he had no pain; but the instant he turned away, the sense of desolation pierced and tore his heart.

Rudolph took him down to the hall or refectory, which was vacant, and set food before him. 'You must eat, Gerard,' he said in his grave way. 'There is much to be done that you cannot attempt fasting.'

'Much? How much? I am finished, Rudolph, and yet you talk.'

His brother smiled. 'Drink this coffee first. I made it. Now, eat a little. What! you finished? I have gone through worse; and am I a ruin?' He would not let Gerard answer until he had made a sort of breakfast.

'You men of the world—imaginative, self-confident,' Rudolph said by-and-by, 'think you have had every experience life can give. It is not so. There are worlds

unknown. I have brought you into a fresh one. Learn what it has to show you; then do as you like.'

'I don't want to see anyone,' answered the musician, almost petulantly.

'You shall not. Father Abbot leaves you in my hands. He begs that you will stay here as long as you find it agreeable. I have mentioned that you are not very well, and would wish to rest a little. We often have artists, lawyers—all sorts of professional men—staying at the monastery. They come to recruit, spend a few days, and go back new made. There is no one here at present; you will have it all to yourself.'

'But you spoke of a retreat—preaching, I suppose—don't strangers attend?'

'It is not preaching. I will give you the book—"*The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*"—quite different from preaching. We begin to-night. Father Arrowsmith, a Jesuit, conducts the retreat. You can watch it from a gallery, unseen.'

Gerard did not consent immediately. 'I have other things to do,' he objected. 'There is that villain, Harland, to denounce and chastise. And—Marian—how could I let her go last night? It was all your doing, Rudolph.' His blood was up again.

'All mine,' answered the monk, cheerfully. 'But you have plenty of time. Can you assure me, *Gerardo mio*, that your mind is clear, your course of action decided? You can't. Is it wise to go down into battle without a plan?'

No, it was not wise. The brothers talked and argued more than is here set down, speaking sometimes in German, and falling into attitudes which reminded them of early days; but in those days both were passionate and headstrong; now Rudolph, consulting a guide whom the musician did not know, exhibited a calm sense that made him master of the crisis. Patient and doctor they seemed, although on one side was genius, on the other only a firm decision. 'I ask you to put off action for a week; it is not much,'

repeated the Olivetan. 'Conrad has your affairs in hand; they will not suffer. As regards that admirable woman who is devoted to you, I do not feel anxious. If you can be as heroic as she is—you can and will—the future may be left to shape itself.'

These were arguments to which his brother had no reply. He was affected by the thought of Marian. Impossible to doubt the love which, in a heartrending moment, had made her give him up. It was a call to heroism, as Rudolph warned him. Could he be less brave than a woman?

'I will walk about in the monastery grounds,' he said, when they left the hall; 'you have my promise to do nothing hastily.'

The view which met his eyes, on emerging from the central porch and standing on the terrace that ran the length of the house, had never been described to him. It was very fine. These heights, now known as Monte Vergine, but having a Welsh name that signified 'the hills of the silver showers,' bounded a valley, at the other end of which glistened a sea of misty blue. Along the glade went a stream, playing with huge dark boulders thrust in its way, giants from some incalculable past, their hands out to catch and turn back the rivulet, which would keep on growing and broadening, until it leaped into the waters of the Irish Sea. Only the pencil of Turner could have thrown upon canvas the gorgeous mixtures of autumn, from pale gold, or dead brown, to flaming crimson, with a lawn of purest green to receive the falling leaves, which filled the valley under a gauze just visible, the sun flinging it aside majestically, and displaying upper spaces undimmed by a speck of vapour. Farmhouses lay about, not numerous, each significant as a feature in the landscape; white roads threaded their way between the fields, the limestone hedges, and the brimming becks, which a late rain had swollen. There was a rich and radiant glory above the emerald, the blue, the white, the myriad tones of wood and water, that made a

picture so complete; and the monastery reigned over it in the foreground, a building too fresh to be thought venerable, yet of a bold pointed style, which was well in keeping with the grace and splendour of the outlook.

Elven moved down the steps and sauntered, meditating, under oaks which still kept their leaves, burnt into a thousand colours, while the dream held him of Marian passing over that sea, not many miles off, during the night. If a wish could land him on board from the monastery, how soon he would be there! He must endure until they met once more. But, perhaps, it was the end, and that chapter closed. A long life, crowded with adventures, had printed on his mind the conviction that events, persons, chances, fell by some law of association into groups. They came, they went, they never happened twice. He had folded down a new page with '*The Descent of Istar*,' in which Marian was the goddess. What would the next be like? As he asked himself the question, his eyes fell on a title, or rubric, in the volume of Latin given him by Rudolph, which he held in his hand. It ran thus:—'*Certain Spiritual Exercises, whereby a man may overcome himself, and set his life in order, not determining himself by any lawless affection.*'

'That is a rude Latin—and an uncommonly bold pretence,' said Gerard. 'Order, disorder—overcoming a man's self? What is myself? It would be a rare alchemy that resolved my elements in its crucible, and brought out gold. I have been searching into Gerard Elven with scalpel, microscope—I don't know what all—since I was a lad of eight or nine. But he is too fine for me—the rascal! Religion is, assuredly, not wanting in courage.'

He put all that away; and, as a tender breeze came coquettishly stirring the branches and loosening their ardent leaves, which fell with reluctance, a chord that seemed to answer, to echo, the deceitful coaxing of the wind hummed in the inward ear which made him a musician. It was something he had not hitherto caught—a wizardry of fantastic love, enamoured of things dead

or dying—the mere putting on of passion, delicate enough, but curiously artificial, theatrically unreal. 'I must fix that motive,' he said, with a sudden pleasure. 'How modern it is! What shall I call it? *Love's Twilight?* Not a bad suggestion.' And he listened again. There was a faint mockery of his own late doings in the theme—which he would enlarge, and so torture himself, daintily setting out that Gerard Elven was—a fool. '"*Love's Twilight*"—prettier than lawless affection;' but somehow the Latin of the book and his just-invented motive had a touch in common.

Eventide had fallen. Gerard was sitting in a high gallery, with tiers of bookshelves all round, whence he looked upon a singularly picturesque arrangement of chiaroscuro, unexpected and novel. He thought Rembrandt would have approved of it. The long windows were darkened by curtains to the ground. A solitary pair of wax candles, one on each side, illumined the crucifix which stood on a small table, over against him, at the end of the library; and a chair by the side was set for one who had not arrived. Rows of chairs took up the floor. Assembled in the room were all those silent spectres in white habits whom he had seen, but not spoken to, as he wandered alone in the garden or met them in crossing the cloisters. Their hoods were drawn over their brows; with their backs turned to him, they had the air of seated statues. But when the door opened, and a man in a dark cassock entered hastily, the statues gave signs of life. They fell on their knees; a strong voice preluded in plain chant with the words, '*Veni, Creator Spiritus*,' and the rest took up the medieval rhythm, which Gerard felt to be noble and severe. It had exactly the effect of striking a keynote to all that followed.

His eyes, peering into the vault below, made out Father Arrowsmith—who now, after a short collect, had seated himself—as a thin, stooping, middle-aged man, excessively pale, with nervous hands that had no gesture in them, but kept still with an effort. His hair was

snow-white and scanty. The voice, probably at one time not unmusical, had been worn by much speaking; it sounded hollow, without resonance—the least eloquent that could be imagined. But he did not aim at being eloquent. Quite the reverse. He had a quick, business-like air which forbade the notion; if he meant to be impressive, it was neither by action nor by excited oratory. His discourse—to call it more than it seemed—bore an odd resemblance to the proceedings of a surgeon who is about to perform an operation, and lays out his instruments one after another, examining each carefully. Or he was sketching a map of the route along which the men before him had to travel. But he had also a philosophy; and Gerard, attentive, though far from convinced, began soon a mental dialogue in which he was answering, criticising, or half-accepting, the words of the Jesuit.

'There is a principle—a self-evident truth,' said Father Arrowsmith in his dispassionate tones, '—which our holy Father, Saint Ignatius, calls "the Foundation," and upon which the whole of religion is built. It cannot be denied when it has been looked at with the mind's eye, but it may be forgotten or evaded. Woe, however, to him that will not see it as it is. Without this principle, a man lives the sport and plaything of his appetites—at random, at the mercy of everything that happens; he was right yesterday, he is wrong to-day; and he has neither compass nor steering-gear by which to be guided. This great first truth, upon which all else depends, is that man exists for a certain, definite, unmistakable purpose; that he has an end or meaning, and consequently a task which he is sent into this world to fulfil. What is that end? The Saint replies, "Man was made that he may praise God, do Him reverent service, and thereby save his own self. All other things whatsoever—sickness, health, poverty, riches, good report and evil report, life and death—are ordained to help him to that end. Wherefore he should keep himself in a state of perfect indifference towards them, choosing only that which is conducive to the Divine purpose." In brief,

"*Abstine, sustine*"—the ancient Stoic rule—is the rule of reason, if we know ourselves to be in an ordered world, of which God is the explanation, the First and Final Cause.'

It is difficult to paint Gerard's astonishment on hearing so austere, so mathematical a prelude to services which he had dreamt of as a series of emotions wrought up, by every impassioned device, until the subject of them was intoxicated and taken out of himself. He looked at least for an oratorio by Handel or Mendelssohn; but Father Arrowsmith was playing one of old Sebastian Bach's fugues, an exercise in counterpoint. Effective with his audience, nevertheless, for they sat immovable, and all eyes went one way. It was simply amazing.

The Father continued. It was imperative on them all, he said, to persuade the intellect of this master-light before they took a step in advance. He did not want to kindle their feeling, which might blaze up and fall dead again; neither could they choose aright, or act aright, unless they had seen the rational order of things in which they moved, and by means of which they were to attain life's eternal purpose. '*Notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum, ut sciam quid desit mihi! Deus meus, illumina tenebras meas!*' Light first—a reasoned conviction—then the way would be clear. And if anyone thought he could not see that principle, let him take this terrible method of arriving at it—consider existence as a moral chaos, man an enigma, his nature at war with itself, conduct a lottery, the grave an open question; then ask himself what would follow. The appeal was to facts. This key unlocked all doors. No other had ever been found.

The surgeon had laid his patient on the marble slab. But now came a fresh surprise. Not the surgeon, but the man himself, was to perform the operation. Father Arrowsmith arose, uttered a prayer, and went out swiftly as he had come in. The monks, filing away into the darkness, disappeared. In a few moments Gerard sat solitary in the great room. The candles had been extinguished. He saw and heard nothing. No one came.

Still he was pursued by the image of a medical theatre and a demonstration; must he plunge the knife into his own heart? Rudolph threatened him with an experience he had never gone through. Was it this? An ordered world—a mad world—which? If reason outside of him, then God. If no reason, chaos. Life had a definite end, or else it was chance, absurdity, an incoherent dream. The end was—reverent service. He had revered his art. Surely that was enough. But the artist himself remained an enigma; he must confess that. Art had not saved him. No, not saved him; for he was sitting there miserable, his mind adrift, a fearful unhappiness gnawing at his vitals. The Father's argument *ex absurdo* was amazingly strong. *Did* any other key unlock all doors?

As he lay dreaming the same night, or, between asleep and awake, heard the monotonous recitative of the monks through his open window above them, a pit seemed to be dug in his brain; he went down shuddering to some depth unfathomable, and there everything that had ever touched him nearly was set in relief. He read the whole story on a pavement to which his eyes were bent, although he did his utmost to look up, to climb along the sides of the pit, to see as little as possible. He was compelled to see it all. Not the creations of his genius; they were hidden; and when he cried out, 'I am an artist; my life is in my work,' it availed him nothing. This was Gerard Elven's life, one phase after another, sculptured on the floor over which he walked. A fierce, accompaniment went with it and would not rest: 'See this, and this, and this,' it insisted, while his terror grew, and a loathing of himself, smitten as with disease. For he was a pleasure-loving creature, not lifted above his time, never broken in to discipline. He had always seized the moment by its golden curls. Was that well? the voice asked mockingly.

Faces and voices, accents which thrilled, eyes alight with passion, tables set, and a crowd gesticulating; men

half drunk in curious imbecile attitudes—all the noise, the disorder of evenings that lasted on far beyond midnight—that side of life which the day shrinks from or forgets, which decent 'ranged' fathers of families look back upon with astonishment, nor can believe they ever went near—it flared up from the pavement, and Gerard saw his own face among the rest, himself in the curious imbecile attitudes, absurd and unpardonable. Was it a caricature? He did not answer the question, but went on dreaming. In the journey, as he trudged again over days long buried, he felt that no power was left him. Every image struck hard and struck home; they made the very path along which he had to go, and drew him forward. To what hideous blackness? He knew not; all he could distinguish, and it roused a singular shame as well as fear in him, was a voice speaking out of the shadow, a mighty mouth, bidding him come.

The scenes broke up into pieces dashed with all manner of lights, a wheeling fantasy, sketches imperfect but close to his eyes, which their colour burnt, of women's features, of a dance going round him, of a theatre in rapid motion, where the stage ran along, and he with it, over the streets of great cities. His life and he were Siamese twins, distinct but for ever united—a hateful life—he could have struck it one blow and murdered it—cut through the ligament with a razor, though killing himself—but his arm was paralysed. A rain of tears rushed from the eyes that these colours burnt; he woke up crying.

The monks had finished their matins long ago. In the silence of the white guest chamber Gerard listened to his own convulsive sobs; and, when he had recovered a little, some panic fell which was like the sadness of delirium tremens. It had a kind of apprehension, not now turning to pictured scenes, but sick with fear of the invisible that might any moment put on a shape and come down. He wanted a friend to be near him. Yet, from pride or shame, he would not tell his brother; and at breakfast neither said anything significant. In Gerard's

conscience one word from yesterday stood out—'a moral chaos.' He had dreamed that such was his life—not his plays, he could never give them up to condemnation in a court of Christian appeal—but there was himself, and, except as a man of genius, had he the least value or meaning? Was not his dramatic invention all in all?

Walking in a pleached alley, where through the leaves, afar, the blue waters glistened like fragments of a June heaven—still terrified, but satirising his overworn nerves, Gerard came face to face with Father Arrowsmith. The Jesuit would have passed on. There was a slight hesitation on both sides, when, not without an effort, the musician spoke.

'I am an artist,' he said, leaping into the arena. 'Art—mine, at all events, music and the drama—is emotion. Do you reckon it among the lawless affections of which I read in this book?' He was holding the Latin volume, his fingers between its leaves.

The Father gave him a searching glance. 'What is your own view?' he said courteously.

Gerard laughed. 'My view? That the power of a work is measured by the amount of passion one puts into it. Now, last night you ran down passion.'

'I called reason the master-light. Could you have music without mathematics?'

'But music without feeling? Are we only rational machines? What do you make of genius, Father? You condemn inspiration, impulse, the creative fever? We must go by rule, you say. It is the most resolute defence of the Academic—the Renaissance—the old classic—I ever heard. Have you no message for us moderns?'

This language appeared to be new in the good man's hearing. He listened with attention, but, as the spirit of his training suggested, let Elven run on. He never pronounced hastily on a question not set down in his books.

'I suppose the classics *are* what we rely upon as a test of literature; certainly we rely upon them in Education. Is that wrong?'

Elven shrugged his shoulders. 'I speak for myself.

Education does not make a genius; it often unmakes him. Your rule and compass are good for mediocrity. Reason is cold; it has no heart; it glides over the surface and constructs a diagram.'

'But the opposite of reason is unreason,' said the Jesuit, smiling, though with some severity. 'Would you have men cultivate the insane? You talk of diagrams. What do you make'—still smiling—'of a musical score? Can you do without one?'

'That is a fair argument,' said Elven, struck by the dexterity with which Father Arrowsmith turned his own phrase against him. 'Quite fair. But all this machinery of the soul—the spirit—religion? It is exercising under a drill-sergeant. Must we? And I have always hated drill.'

The flushed face and bright eyes, in which, low down, fear was lurking, gave his critic, who remained quite calm, the advantage that comes from discipline *versus* emotion. 'Let us walk,' he said. 'The day is chill for standing. What a delightful place these Fathers have!'

'Perfect, if a mood were a life,' answered the other. 'But moods change.'

'God's grace, which we term vocation, will make it a life,' said Father Arrowsmith. 'I did not overlook the need of Divine help in my meditation last night, did I?'

'*Deus meus, illumina tenebras meas*,' echoed, from his reminiscences, the musician. 'There is a prayer and an argument I can feel. It is too beautiful, too humble, not to have something in it from beyond—if there is a Beyond.'

'If there is not, will your music and your Fine Arts make up for the loss?'

'I never said they would; but if I do not know, ought I to pretend?'

'You can know. St Ignatius puts you on considering that your life should have—I will say in your own language—a rhythm, else it is discord and an utter failure. So much you will admit. There must be harmony or there will be misery. Is not that true? I mean, it is an actual experience.'

'The misery, not the harmony. Religious people sin, don't they? And feel unhappy?'

'You are hard upon them. Don't be so cruel, my son. They have their troubles, I allow; they sin, but they can get forgiven. They have the light in which they know how to repent.'

'Come back, please, to my question which, pardon me, Father, you have not answered. Is cool, deliberate reason the power that makes the world's heroes, artists, leaders, nay, or the saints of religion? To me, I tell you frankly, it would be a strait-waistcoat. My best has come out of a dream; it is given to me, I can't tell how. The mere thought of working it out like a sum sends a cold shiver through me.'

'I know very little of your art,' said Father Arrowsmith; 'one of our musical composers might be of service if you thought well to consult him—we have some eminent men in our Society who write for the organ—but may I not say this? Inspiration is a positive force—like heat, magnetism or chemical action. Reason is, in a certain sense, negative—better still, regulative—the power of arrangement, order, distribution, consistency. It is what lawyers would term the rule *Nisi*. What it forbids ought not to be done—in art or in life. Does that please you?'

'It hangs together, I think,' said Gerard; 'but, observe, it puts reason second, not first. You began with reason last night. Why was that?'

'Because we had, or could have, experience of power,' replied the Jesuit, his pale features lighting up. 'And of all kinds of powers *The Exercises of St Ignatius are* a drill, or a regimen, which takes the soul as it finds it. We want to subdue the spiritual chaos; and we first beg of the Creator to say "*Fiat Lux*." But inspiration will come all in good time. Wait for the Meditation of the Two Standards. There you will see.'

'How long must I wait?' asked Elven. 'And may I speak to you again?'

'To be sure; whenever you wish. I shall give the

"*Two Standards*" in four days from now. It belongs to the Second Week of the Exercises.'

They parted. The musician continued his walk up and down the pleached alley. His terror had something abated ; the Invisible might, after all, be not ungracious.

Four days after. A brilliant dawn, windy, with clouds of reddish purple, moving in banners through a heaven which caught from them in their vanishing a blush as faint as passionate. The rare morning light, insistent with a message of its own. And in the library, where the curtains had been gathered back from the windows, Gerard saw the monks come slowly along to their places, no one regarding his neighbour. The downcast eyes gave a singular fixed appearance to them all, as moulded on a pattern paler than marble effigies stretched out on a tomb. Their habits looked fresh, almost dainty. Voiceless and sightless, it was remarkable how each made the impression of being himself, a solitary individual, thinking his own thoughts — as many men, so many worlds, closed, nay, impenetrable. They were not a regiment. So would a company of immortal spirits have moved, alone with the Alone. It was an atmosphere in which high and serene resolutions might flourish, favourable to genius, but set free from observation. Merely to watch these men had upon the sensitive mood of the composer a bracing effect. He was at home here, in this Quakers' meeting. Ritual, images, music, the gorgeous outward show associated with Catholic dogma, had no place in what they were about. It was an exercise, wholly spiritual, of the mind communing with itself. The monks did not so much as sing a hymn.

But now they sat where the windy red banners looked in upon them, sometimes flinging a purple gleam across a forehead or a floating white garment; and Father Arrowsmith, taking up his parable, began to enlarge on the famous meditation, known as the '*Two Standards,*' which he set before them as a painter would dash in the main outlines of his picture, to be finished

in detail by the pupil's hand. They must, he said, imagine it in the enthusiastic way of the Spanish saint, a Biscayan, full of crusading fervour, to whom life presented itself as a Holy War—Christ the Captain on one side, Lucifer, the rebel and renegade, over against Him. Did they want inspiration to urge them on the noblest course? Let them contemplate the struggle and contrast the leaders. Heroism never died out; nay, there was an enthusiasm of darkness as well as of light. The modern man, sometimes a recluse in his ivory tower, dedicated to literature, art, metaphysics, or self-indulgence, was often effeminate, but always given up to impulse. He went adrift as appetite, fancy, intoxication, terror, led him or drove him. He was the creature of currents; yet acknowledged no superior in heaven or earth. None!—and still the mighty Samson was overthrown by a look, a sound, a shadow of pleasure. He was dissolved in lust—an insect crawling over the leaves of the great world-forest, that took its colour from what it fed upon. He was simply a son of chaos. And he served the Prince of the power of the air—a cruel captain, full of treacheries. In the meditation they would fix their thoughts on the fire that is never quenched, the black fumes of disgust and suicide, the bonds which entangle the soul. Modern books reeked with a sadness too dreadful to be quite human. Behind their frivolous or desperate language the Terrible Shadow lurked. For the veil of things did not hide vacancy but powers, conscious, never-dying, between whom a warfare went on always, most embittered in the heart of man.

The violent ruddy clouds, heaped up in the sky, were to Gerard's imagination thronged with celestial warriors during this vivid appeal. Where philosophy talked of systems, religion, he said to himself, evoked persons, peopling the unknown. But from the deeps of death, so confidently painted, with Satan's standard floating over them, the tired voice suddenly went up, rejoicing and tender, to that sacred spot, nigh unto Jerusalem, said the meditation, where a holier Captain

stood, '*speciosus et amabilis*,' inviting them to His service of love. 'There is but one passion,' cried Father Arrowsmith, 'which cannot go astray, cannot be too great—the passion for righteousness embodied in Christ. Philosophy and love are here the same thing. No vague ideals are these, dressed up in fine words, drawing on to-morrow because they have had no yesterday, but ascertained and ascertainable experience. Love alone, thus kindled, will conquer lust. "*Quod isti et isti, cur non ego?*" Others have found it so. I am a man as they were. I can serve under this standard if I will.'

Life, he went on to say, is an art, too complex for any rule but one. And that was the imitation of Christ. Who would dare to say that it could not stir men to enthusiasm now because of things guessed at, affirmed, or again denied, by the changing opinions around them? He was willing to grant that many were joining the other camp on pretence of freedom, and there *was* a deadly kind of freedom which achieved monstrous effects—the flowers and fruits of sin. Were it not so, evil would have no charm and virtue no trial. The Holy War was a campaign, not a silken triumph in which blood never flowed. Whoso took part in it on the Christian side must be prepared for humiliation, mockery and apparent disaster. But their Captain had gone through all this before them. Were they more innocent than Jesus? They ought even to beg and entreat that the world might use them despitefully, so long as grace was given in the fiery trial. To them it was announced, 'Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake'—a glorious inheritance.

And the Beatitude which summed all others and set the crown upon them, was this, 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Gerard saw two glowing coals, instead of those pale, shrunken eyes, when Father Arrowsmith broke out into this vehement exhortation. And he remarked how a spiritual drill, which had begun so

calmly, was passing on to another stage where the violent would bear away the Kingdom of Heaven on the points of their spears.

The library was streaming with crimson thrown from the clouds when Father Arrowsmith came to an end. He went out slowly, exhausted by emotion, which was neither feverish nor hysterical, but too great for one who felt every word he uttered. And the monks, retiring each to his own cell, would now take up that sketched outline, work it into imagination, mind, heart and will, applying the arguments to themselves individually, finding their place in the ranks of this crusade, acknowledging their peculiar dangers, and turning what some would have scorned as the day-dream of a Castilian hidalgo, suggested by long struggles with Moors and Saracens, to sternest prose.

'I see now,' Gerard was saying to himself, 'where the intense fanaticism and measureless daring of the Company of Jesus were derived from. Their mission has been to them a Holy War. But I should like to point out some differences between the modern man and the Saracen. Am I, for instance, the infidel who has taken service under Satan's banner? Had I no care but to satisfy my appetites? Yet I have not served the Lord Jesus much, I must confess.'

The day, with its tempestuous changes, pleased him. There was war in Heaven. Up and down the great garden he roved in a shower of leaves or sudden rain, fancying to himself the mind of a man who should consecrate his powers to the triumph of love thus imaged forth. It was love—nothing else and nothing less—a passion capable of endurance, fixed on the one Divine leader who had died to live again, and was bent on conquering a kingdom. Love edged with fear, made exceedingly tender by pity, spurred on by emulation, which counted all things as dross in comparison with doing as it was bidden and bringing delight to the Master's heart. Fanatics, but their enthusiasm annealed by a process of cool reasoning. And so set on fire as to behold their very selfishness transformed in this flame; for they would be

more than conquerors—but with Him. Strange enough, after a couple of thousand years, when the new miracles of science, the introspection of a critical and imaginative art, the movement of nations over all seas and deserts, were, one would suppose, antiquating this figure of a Galilean peasant. But He lived still—and what a life!

He examined the Book of Meditations under this feeling, and found it in design as in fact an outcome of supreme ability. It made no show of style or eloquence, was deliberate, almost dry, full of minute directions for every day and hour spent by the soldier in exercise, with all the lucid brevity of Cæsar describing a march or a line of battle. It had none of those pages written in ecstasy, and seldom those breathing ejaculations, which he had read and marvelled at in the mystics of the North; its manner was quite unlike Thomas à Kempis, and a contrast as complete as could be invented to Jacob Behmen. On the part of the novice it supposed an absolute but reasonable acquiescence in the process of mental healing to which he gave himself up; it was a manual of religious therapeutics. Exact, severe, but holding out as a reward the new life, it dealt with the patient firmly and gently, calling his faculties one after another into requisition, so that, in the end, he might say that he had done the work himself and go out a trained, a high-spirited recruit, to the field where nothing but his own want of courage could defeat him.

Moreover, it had a strong dramatic interest—the weight of resistance to be overcome—that peril from oneself, the enemy watching, and the sense of a boundless world-conflict, where every man must take a side. The Greek *Anangke* was here felt again, not a myth or a poetical device, but the law of the combat. Was it not profoundly scientific—that idea of Reason triumphant at last in an ordered universe? Yet—there was so much against it in the nature of things. Or did it point to some deeper principle? The '*Exercises*,' at all events, went upon a view in which there was infinite scope for the brave man struggling with adversity.

They gave no promise of an idle or an empty day. The precision on which they insisted was the most modern thing in the book. Science, rather than literature. But the un-conscious, the sub-conscious, where was it? Not dreams it seemed to say, but algebra; spiritual, of course; yet how far removed from the reverie, the careless wandering, light and untrammelled, which Gerard Elven had indulged in, knowing that a sudden flash out of the cloud would bring music with it in rain, or thunder, or the rising wind!

True, and the man who had composed this volume—a tesselation in which every atom spoke of the shaping given it—Ignatius of Loyola would have been at home with the mechanician, the chemist, the astronomer. Had he made no provision for art and the artist? On looking a second time, Gerard was aware of a method which ran through the Meditations and gave them an upper and a lower plane—as in the temple sculpture of the Greeks, there was a frieze crowded with living figures above the severe nakedness of the walls. When the foundation had been laid, the purifying expiation fulfilled, a long array of pictures followed, in which the life of Christ, the Captain, put on the most vivid hues. It was still practice, not poetry; but the Via Illuminativa—the Way of Enlightenment—deserved its name. The last of these contemplations was Jesus going up into Heaven—a luminous altar-piece bathed in glory. Perhaps the answer to his doubts lay hidden in that splendour.

'I am the creature of currents—the son of chaos,' he said, with a serious irony, when next Father Arrowsmith and he were walking under the twisted branches. 'You allow us no strength of character at all—effeminate moderns that we are. But are we not interesting? Don't we succeed? Think of our literature; have you any others worth calling by thename? The music of the century is as great in its kind as Florentine or Venetian art of four hundred years ago—not unworthy of Athens when it had sculpture to match our modern science. I needn't say more. How do you account for it?'

'Music makes no demand on character, in my sense of the word,' returned Father Arrowsmith. 'Science has nothing in common with morals—except a certain steadying influence, and that by no means on all. Can the modern man—you understand me—the bright consummate flower of a civilisation which is not Christian, nor pretends to be—can he say that he has a code of principles? He is interesting—so is a patient dying of consumption—a morbid or a scientific interest. Make it human, shall you be in love with the disease?'

'May I ask if you have read Balzac?' said Elven. 'I mean it seriously.'

'I have read the Gospel. What can Balzac teach me that I shall not find there?'

'But is there not such a thing as diagnosis? You describe the modern man in a figure. He is a thousand, a million figures. What is more, he resembles none of the past. Take me as a cheap example. I want, perhaps, to be converted. Surely you ought to know me first.'

'I ought. Confession is the way, not Balzac. Tell me how you have lived?'

Gerard smiled and shook his head. 'Another time. We don't speak the same language.'

'We speak it enough for me to see that you have gone through a trial,' said the gentle voice. 'Lately? It has left traces. I know well a man is not healed by formulas, yet the axiom holds good, "Lust can be conquered only by love." Right, my son, how right! you hear me, and are not angry. When I say lust, I am thinking of the desire which will not bear the yoke of the Law. And the milder yoke—*jugum Christi!* Do I come near your trouble? The two concupiscences; read about them in St Augustine's "*City of God*"—the one engendering unto bondage; but the other is free.'

A long silence. They turned, and turned again. 'You have given me a fine subject for my next play,' said Gerard, at last rousing himself. He was excited; his nerves tingled as a warm current ran along them, and a shudder down his back. In this sudden sug-

gestion of his art he forgot the artist, forgot his trouble. 'Two loves,' he murmured—'and the struggle for victory —whichever won, the issue would be tragic. Impulse and law, and the martyrs of each. The world-movement passing through their hearts. A romance, but also unalloyed reality.' It was the story of himself and Marian!

His eyes were intent on something at a distance; his lips not quite closed. A deep colour rushed into his face, dyeing it momentarily. He stopped dead in his walk.

'Are you ill?' inquired the Father, taking him by the arm.

'Ill?' said Gerard, with a strange high intonation, half laughing. 'Not ill, but inspired. I've got it. I see, I hear—what a thing it is to let oneself alone! A new drama! But I must see Rudolph. Where is Rudolph, Father?'

The Jesuit, observing him with curiosity, drew out his watch. 'Father Rudolph will be in his room now, making the meditation. Can I help you, meanwhile?'

'Not the least in the world,' said the composer, with radiant eyes. 'But you have. A thousand thanks. I wanted just that stroke on the anvil. Now, Rudolph, you shall make amends for "*Istar*," and we will put the "*Two Standards*" into music.'

He was gone up the garden in a flash. Father Arrowsmith looked after him once, and then opened his Breviary. He had not finished his "*Little Hours*."

CHAPTER XXV

RUTH AND ORPAH

THE sky of Naples over a smokeless Liverpool. An enormous blaze of advertisements, flaring to the tops of tall stucco or brown stone constructions, alike in their repeated rows of windows, monotonous, insignificant—the horizontal style which modern cities love, and which is merely the dead perpendicular turned another way, hopeless and ugly—the straight line that kills the picturesque. Here and there a vast building of bizarre outlandish make; the Alhambra borrowed for a millionaire's house, and hardly knowing where it stood; the Palazzo Farnese, imitated in dark red stone; the Louvre transformed to an hotel, side by side with the gaunt prose of forty years ago; and on a level which cut every front into sections, and ruined the perspective, a railway with moving cars, resounding bells, the cry of newspapers, ticket-offices in the air, ladder-like ascents from the obscure streets underneath, and crowds of well-dressed people above, below, around, in perpetual motion. The two women clung to each other, and, as the train whirled them along, looked out on New York.

To say that they did not like what they saw would be a small thing. It smote them into bewilderment. The tingling air drove their pulse at a mighty rate. The fierce colours of all these bills, posters, names over shop fronts, pictures of a dismal, staring or hideous realism, allowed no comfort to the eyes; they were in a narrow strait, choked with life, brimming over with

men and women, all in the swim and the struggle. Down side streets, the train moving always forward, and appearing to climb as it went, they caught glimpses of poverty on the doorsteps, at the windows, and about the gutters, where pools lay shining under the sun. A world's fair! Every nation had contributed its quota. The names that Marian read, while these innumerable stores passed in her sight, were English, Scotch, Irish, German, Dutch, Polish, Hebrew, Chinese. But especially, she thought, German, Scotch and Hebrew. It was Oxford Street magnified, multiplied, taking the lion's share of the city, and never coming to an end. Broadway—or Babel? Never had she been cast into such a throng and a press of humanity before. It terrified, it appalled her. The *Golden Fleece* would now have appeared a quiet resting-place in mid-Atlantic, compared with a city which was all shops, railways, hotels—pitilessly public wherever she looked—not the home of these hundreds of thousands, but their mart, exchange, club-room, bar, dockyard—and possibly their theatre.

'Look!' said Giulia Cornaro, whispering, 'Ralston's.' The tall spare front rose skyward, plastered with bills, prismatic and formidable, to their right as they travelled up town.

'*Mr Soames of New York*,' they read in this gigantic rainbow. And the adventures, laughter-moving or sanguinary, of Mr Soames were painted more than life-size for the delectation of passers-by, who would want to see them plastically rendered in the evening after such a whetting of their appetite. 'Did you say Mr Ralston was about to restore the Italian Opera?' said Marian. 'Those bills are melodrama, without the music.'

'He is what you other English call an organ-grinder,' said Giulia, attempting a smile, but her eyes were sad. 'He plays the tunes you ask for. Mr Soames will retire when Donizetti arrives.'

'Let us hope so,' answered her friend. 'Ah, there I read, "the Delaware House," just down that street. And here is a station. We go down, apparently, by the lamp-post.'

In the afternoon came a message from the impresario. Madame Cornaro would be kind enough to call on him in his office. 'You come with me,' she insisted, for Marian did not know whether it would make or mar, but Giulia refused to go alone, 'I am all trembling,' she said; 'there is a dagger in my brain—what a headache! And I don't want to be ill. Oh, if my little Zorzi was a man, capable to take care of himself—no, I never, never would mount the stage any more. Do you think I will be ill?'

She had an intense expression of fatigue, with restless eyes, the light coming and going in them, as of a lamp which revolved at uncertain intervals. It might be only excitement. How if it should turn to fever?

'When do you play your best—ill or well?' asked Marian, anxious to protect her from new disappointments.

'I play Lucia di Lammermoor—and tragic parts—best with a little touch of fever. But I must be quite well for comedy.'

'Then we will make Mr Ralston give you tragedy first.'

'Moment, please,' said Giulia. She went hastily to her room, and, on coming back, Marian remarked that she was not nearly so nervous. The eyes sparkled with less change in them.

'You have taken something,' she said gravely, 'not spirits, I hope, Signora.'

'No—*seulement une piqure—de morphine; ce n'est rien*,' answered Giulia, speaking French for the first time The other did not know what to reply.

'Is it a habit?' she inquired, with some embarrassment, 'dangerous, I should say.'

'Certainly dangerous. I do it not often. But now it will give me courage.'

They would both require a courage not inspired by morphine. Mr Ralston was seated in his bureau when Giulia sent in her card, adding Miss Greystoke's name. He rose, shook hands with them, fixed a sharp eye upon Marian, and offered them chairs.

Mr Ralston might be any age from thirty-five to fiffy. His close-cut hair was grey, and so was his moustache; but the keen, colourless, occupied features, and the rapid movements, had a kind of youth in them. Excellent teeth, probably false. Light grey eyes, a square forehead, ears full and set forward, jaws too well developed, large firm hands, often in the pockets of his morning-coat. Business written all over him, from his boots to the bald crown of his head. A strong, emphatic voice, clear to the last word in every sentence, with that indefinable American accent, which it is easy to caricature, but a stroke of genius to imitate. He was polite and complimentary, but hurried. Towards men his language would have been no doubt less courteous; more direct it could not be. He spoke to Madame Cornaro; he looked at Marian. After some inquiries,—

'Yes,' he said reflectively, 'the Italian Opera will draw good houses. But Mr Soames is drawing better. We shall keep him on the bills quite a little time yet. In fact, as long as he does draw. You can be recuperating, you know, Madame—the sea tries some constitutions. It has tried yours.' He walked round the bureau, contemplated Mr Soames, who was there, in several attitudes on the walls, and came back.

'Business drooping now, rather—crisis in Wall Street. Financiers must be careful. When they *are* careful financiers' wives don't spend so much at the play. But Mr Soames appeals to our public, crisis or no crisis. Your friend, the lady here, also Italian Opera?' This was all uttered in staccato, with regular pauses of equal length.

Giulia gave a start and turned towards Marian with a frightened face. She had dreamt of this all along. And in a mirror between two playbills she saw what the manager was seeing—a comparative view, deadly to her prospects. Her own sallow, burnt-up cheeks and hollow mask, with perhaps a shade of morphine to wither it—and that stately, passion-breathing figure, the head poised nobly, the lips full of crimson life.

Poor Madame Cornaro! Her speech was gone; she aged visibly, and knew it.

But Marian gave the least little smile—a ripple of light from chin to forehead. The Italian caught some of its brightness.

'I detest the Opera,' said Miss Greystoke, assuming a vehemence she had not felt previously. 'I sing and act—in private, when I can get an engagement. Would you help me, Mr Ralston?'

'With the greatest pleasure,' he replied, shaking hands again. But it was Giulia that kept Marian's fingers between her own, pressing them fervently.

'Still, you *could* take the *rôle* of a heroine, if you were invited?' he said again; 'you have much in your favour, which our audiences would appreciate,' fixing his gaze on her, and wholly disregarding Madame Cornaro.'

'I cannot sing in public—not yet, in any case.'

'Well, well,' benevolently, 'do not let me lose sight of you. Madame,' to Giulia, who was collapsing into the old woman, while her impresario played her false, 'I will let you know when we see our way through the financial hurly-burly. I recommend you to stay in New York. I am off in a couple of days, by the Central, for Chicago; will write or wire you if I don't see you before starting out. For the present, Mr Soames holds the floor. By the bye, Miss—Miss Greystoke—do you go out to parties in this name?'

Oh, no, she never could. Another name darted through her brain like lightning. 'If you get me an engagement, say Mademoiselle Jasmin. It is—it was—a name in our family.'

'Write it, if you please,' said Mr. Ralston, 'not that I shall let it slip from memory. But we Americans prefer to have things in black and white. Now I am going to send Miss Pemberton—one of our most accomplished actresses—to see you safe in the Delaware House. Mention any wish of yours to her during your stay in New York, and she will execute it. Sorry I cannot accompany you myself.'

They were in the electric car, Miss Pemberton be-

side them, and Giulia would have held Marian's fingers still. 'You are an angel,' she said, 'an angel.'

'What should I have been had I encouraged the manager?' said her friend, indignantly.

'My dear, you would have been—a woman. Like the rest of us.'

'I was thinking of Zorzi,' answered Marian. 'How could I take the bread out of your mouth and his?'

But their stay in the American Naples was not long. Happily, for the Delaware House ran away with money which neither could afford; and Giulia's fever, a mental rather than a physical trouble, was increasing every day they spent in looking at curiosities which did not interest them. After the repulse which was due to Mr Soames, the cantatrice had lost heart. She was even ready to go back to London at once; but Marian, still in a cloud, unwilling to move till she saw duty clear, could not promise to be her companion; so they lingered until the message came, 'Will see you in Chicago.' To pay for the journey of nine hundred miles, they must combine, and Marian sold the rest of her jewels. Nothing was left her in the shape of ornaments, except the seed-pearls on Jasmin's embroidered kerchief. She would never sell them.

Her remembrance of the time that followed was always dreamy and uncertain. Perhaps the fever which laid hold of Giulia did not leave her friend, her nurse, quite without harm. Strangers in a strange land, they lost the bearings of every day; and existence, which is so greatly a matter of routine, fell into an improvisation, often sad enough, but for Marian no longer hopeless. Since her notable resolve, loyally to obey what she knew to be the best, her mind was gradually recovering its tone; she enjoyed now a spiritual health, the like of which was unimaginable in other days. But this happy mood gave her no exemption from trial. Only she could now say, in Miranda's phrase, 'O, I have suffered with those that I saw suffer.' It was not on her own account.

A dreamy state, from the hour they left New York behind. The bold or gentle river-landscapes, even now beautiful though winter laid them bare; the crowns of electric light hung over more than one sleeping city; the plains and plains, a sea without waves, dun meadows where houses stood solitary, and the train hurried by, an impatient tourist, the sky which kept its incandescent glare, and showed, unlike England, an immense blue vault far above their heads—and then, as morning advanced, Chicago, the city of giants. How splendidly original, how stirring to the imagination, it all was! But nothing less than a strong effort could seize it and make it real. These two were carried over the land as in an air-borne chariot; they did not see anything with eyes of longing or of ownership; there was no rest for the sole of their foot in a country which spread itself out to their gaze, yet contained not a single friend whose door would open to them. Marian sometimes gave a glance and a sigh to the remembrance of Harry Oberlin. But he was consecrated by unspeakable sorrow—more distant than death could make him. They travelled, scarcely knowing why; Giulia clung to a forlorn hope; in the other bosom, it may be, some presentiment was alive, warning her that, once in Chicago, news would be accessible. Turn back she could not; the current set towards the West. She let it drive.

They found lodgings in a private house on Lassalle, by no means at the centre of things, but some miles down the street; and, as soon as they were established, Madame Cornaro lay prostrate with an attack of low fever. Week after week passed, during which Marian, if she had an hour off duty, could seldom sleep. She explored the astonishing city. But afterwards to tell what she saw would have been impossible to her. The stupendous height of the buildings, with a smoky London sky often above them, had a singular effect on her nerves. She seemed to be always climbing dizzy ascents, but never to reach a landing-place. And she counted the tiers of windows again and again, only to lose her reckoning. But two things delighted her—yea, and a

third—the breadth of these long streets, which in their proportions were imperial, beggaring any she had seen in Europe; the drawbridges, lifting continually, as immense crafts went to and fro, in a Rotterdam with innumerable canals, dirty but mysterious; and the ever-changing waters of Lake Michigan, across which the winds flew majestically, and storms would follow, making the blue one sea of insane foam, glorious in its rage.

She was always by herself, cut away from every association, and knitting up neither friendship nor acquaintance, of which, indeed, few offered. Giulia's illness brought no message from Mr Ralston. He had gone on to Minneapolis when they arrived in Chicago; and he might have forgotten the existence of the unlucky singer had not Marian written to him in strong terms, when the fever had passed, asking a decision. This, or some other argument, brought him back from the Mississippi. Would Marian wait upon him? She did so, not telling Madame Cornaro beforehand. His politeness was now almost excessive; it ended in a suggestion, weighty with dollars, that Mlle. Jasmin should take a leading part in one of the Italian plays, and Giulia be satisfied to train her. 'The Cornaro is quite past,' said Mr Ralston; 'it was mistaken kindness for me to think of the woman. But you look equal to any character; and you have a voice Madame Giulia could do anything with. You accept, of course.' They were sitting in the manager's office at his theatre on Michigan Avenue.

'I decline, of course,' was the sharp answer.

Mr Ralston sighed. 'A great pity. Let me entreat you to consider it again. I have not been idle in your interest meanwhile. I hope you will give me the pleasure of hearing you sing at Mr Hendrik Henshaw's.'

'Where?' exclaimed the lady, her face as white as the impresario's cravat.

'One of the finest houses in Chicago; on Lincoln Park,' he answered. 'There will be a gathering of our most select citizens in Mrs Henshaw's drawing-room

this day fortnight; and you can name your own terms. The fact is, I have named them already.'

He mentioned a handsome figure. But the Henshaws, and this second Mrs Henshaw? It was bewildering. 'We can't live here another fortnight,' said Marian, with her usual frankness. 'Giulia has come to the end of her money; there is very little left of mine. We ought to flee while we can pay our passage from New York.'

'My dear lady, you will allow me the privilege of being your banker,' said Mr Ralston, drawing a cheque-book to him. 'You shall recoup me when it is convenient.'

But he saw in her eyes that his cheque could not be written. 'I honour your spirit; I deplore your mistrust of me,' said the full-toned voice, discovering a tender, and even a sincere note, in its fall. 'Is there no way I can help you?'

'Let Giulia come to Mrs—Mrs Henshaw's. We will act or sing together; or she can recite. There is no objection to your advancing her a sum on account. That will be all in the way of business. I cannot take your money.'

'No, I see,' remarked the manager in a despondent key. 'You are too young—and, if I had not the misfortune to be married, I would venture on saying, too beautiful.'

He looked so woe-begone that Marian shook, bit her lips violently, and broke into laughter. 'Pray, excuse me,' she said, when she had recovered a little; 'it is rude, but—but really I couldn't help it. Your enthusiasm is overpowering.'

'I will write Madame Giulia her cheque,' said he, with a tinge of colour below the eyes. 'But, seriously, permit me to act as your friend. At Mr Henshaw's I shall renew the offer which I have now made you.'

'And I the refusal which you have not accepted.'

On these terms of admiration and hostility they bade one another good morning.

There were two Chicagos, Marian was finding out. One, which had business by day and pleasure by night

for its occupation, was the Chicago of the broad streets; of the Masonic Temple into which forty thousand people crowded between hours; of the gorgeous mansions with their lawns in front, defended by no paling but inviolable; of the Parks, the carriages, the Auditorium, and the Hendrik Henshaws—a city built for millionaires, and glorying in its millions. The horse-cars showed another city, and a mixed and dingy people, speaking twenty-five languages, working long hours for a wage that left them to look miserable, housed in tenements, round which a squalor, equal to or beyond that of London, was heaped up, and, on the whole, getting neither much amusement nor any large profit from the incessant labour to which they were doomed. Accident, more than once, had taken her out after nightfall. She was never afraid, and she met with no insult. But she saw, not in delirium or under stress of an exaggerating sorrow, many things which drew the blood from her heart. This newest of cities was committing the oldest of sins. Waste and waste; would men never found their gates and their towers save on the bodies of children, offered in a frightful holocaust? Girls not more than Rosie's age were living here, ghosts in the half gloom, young but not innocent, sold to a traffic that went on, night after night, from year's end to year's end; they walked the wide streets, danced in and out of the saloons, served many devils, and got the wages of sin — their own, but still more of that civilisation which was their step-mother. The thought sickened her. Oh, for that Divine Kingdom of peace and purity! Would it never begin in this world?

And they must sing and recite at the second Mrs Hendrik Henshaw's—must!—for Giulia's engagement would depend on it. What was this plague with which high and low were infected? Poverty in the depths of Clarke Street, wealth on Lincoln Park, and the Henshaws breaking a law of life, broken by herself too, not in act but intention! Her spirit was already fleeing back to the law as to a refuge. Now she would not

call her repentance by the name of self-sacrifice—was it anything more than refusing to spread the plague? Those that made the law of no account bore a taint upon them—lepers in soft garments, and women who were traitors to the sisterhood. She condemned herself in saying so; but still, the law was her strength.

A showy house, no great distance from the Lake, lighted as for an illumination, of a bold but hardly successful design, half Moorish, half classic; carriages in a long file coming and going, beautiful strange flowers everywhere, from the open door to the drawing-room; Hungarian or Gipsy airs playing behind the scenes, toilets bought in Paris, or confectioned with rare skill at New York; a museum of curiosities from the most expensive European dealers—and the second Mrs Henshaw, who had probably cost as much as all the bric-à-brac over which, in a glory of jewels, she reigned. By preference Mrs Henshaw talked any foreign language that happened to be going. She would have spoken to Marian in French; but it was not necessary, and Mlle. Jasmin explained that she and the famous cantatrice, with whom she had the honour of coming to Mrs Henshaw's, knew English fairly well. It is just possible that in Marian's speech their hostess detected something exotic. She certainly made the most of her. Madame Cornaro, pale after long sleepless nights, and always troubled, had a look of fallen majesty fitting any tragic part. She said little, pushed her friend forward, and was glad to take shelter behind a forest of ferns, hiding until the moment came for her recitation. Marian would not be separated from the poor lady, but leaning against a window, watched the crowd.

Away in front the shining waters of Lake Michigan, with a large moon above them, and the transparent night. One saw, as it were, gleams of ghostly blue from outside mixing with these thousand lamps—the secret preter-human world we call Nature betraying its eternal presence, but keeping its secret still, a little mockingly, while in the flushed foreground, a winter palace hung

with blooms and tender green draperies, the spectacle was changing without pause, restless and passionate, or simply stirred by excitement which had no aim. To Marian this, she felt, was the saddest moment she had ever lived through. It was hollow and phantasmal —most melancholy, as when the last delusion has been rent in pieces, and there is nothing behind. She felt the disenchantment that comes with grief long borne— melting down all tones, colours and precious effulgences into one indistinguishable grey; and these faces showed it under the lamps, for all their animated smiling, their sparkles and their play of expression. Could she sing to them? What did they want of her—of Giulia? The image and figure of emotion, finely given; more acting as insincere as their own, but with the mask worn loosely, and the hint of the terrible secret. They wanted to be dosed with a facile intoxicant, and to wake up next morning none the worse. It was not the music of Gerard Elven that would please them,—at all events, as he heard it in his dreams. They had never climbed to the heights on which he sang.

Mr Hendrik Henshaw came up and introduced himself. Less than tall, slight, slender, silken hair and beard, a study for an artist, languid, pale, a wicked curve on the right side of his mouth, a fiery eye and nostril. Did Mlle. Jasmin know any settings of Heine? She could sing in German? He was delighted. And Madame Cornaro? That great scene from '*La Somnambula?*' Admirable. He had looked everywhere for Mr Ralston; would be sure to come in. Mr Ralston spoke with a tear in his voice—quite moved—of Mlle. Jasmin's accomplishments. And a judge. Marian did not laugh. It was the way of the world, she supposed. Nor was she thinking much of the sentimental impresario. Her fancy flew to the golden staircase, to Pauline, the blue-eyed, the yellow-haired, the twisting, undulating creature; and she was comparing the two Mrs Henshaws. The lady at Lincoln Park was—how are these nondescripts to be called? A Creole?—or was there not some beautiful, Spanish-looking kind

known as an octaroon? Now she could never have that blood in her veins. But some drop there was, not English-American, which darkened her rather full cheek; and she had a fashion of walking, singular enough though graceful, hardly touching the ground, which set one upon likening her to some wild thing of the woods. Nor did she speak with a native American accent. 'What is Mrs Henshaw's story?' asked Marian of the impresario, when he suddenly came into the fern-forest and began to bow and smile.

'We don't know,' said Mr Ralston, 'she is a second wife—in the catalogue. First marriage dissolved—I mean Henshaw's. Half-breed, you were thinking. Possibly South American—old Spanish and blood of the Incas. They say Henshaw bought her at Rio—rather dear. The women say that because he bought none of *them*. Mrs Henshaw is passionate—very, and a delightful acquisition. But now you are to sing, mademoiselle. The house is crowded.'

They sang, separately and together, and triumphed. Between styles so unlike there could be no rivalry. Judges not less competent than Mr Ralston, but less enamoured, thought they might divide the crown. For if Mlle. Jasmin had a voice of surpassing purity, and threw into her phrasing depths of sadness, on the other hand Giulia sang with perfect finish, from a memory which seemed an inspiration, and her acting, on that small encumbered stage, turned the drawing-room to a scene at the Opera, where all is hushed and breathless attention.

'You have secured your engagement,' said Marian, as they sat down once more behind the ferns. Giulia, unable to speak, did not contradict her.

But in a few minutes the world changed for Marian. She heard a name, listened, and Mr Henshaw was addressing the New York manager, as well as two or three men on the outskirts of their group. 'Ralston, did you take any shares in those big Harland syndicates they were booming over here last spring?'

'I've enough to do with my own syndicates,' re-

plied the manager; 'no, thank you, I was not taking any.'

'Well, a good few did. Not I. But they were tempting. However, I had pretty good advice. You know, the husband of my wife—a charming fellow, I hear, Pauline is quite in love with him still—he cautioned me at the outset. Harland, he wrote, would burst up one of these days.'

'Has he done it?' said another man, turning white and crimson again. 'My God, Henshaw, when did you get the news?'

'He hasn't yet. But he will. This Latimer sends me a tremendous bill against him. I don't speculate, and it won't make one of my hairs turn grey. But Latimer—why should he tell me lies? He never did before. And he says Harland's wife has gone the deuce knows where, and there's trouble about some theatrical business—that's why I asked you, Ralston, old man. And the missionaries—sort of New Testament Stock at ten per cent. started by Harland—they're in the shallows. So now, if you've taken any, sell out to-morrow morning. I thought I would let Chicago know in good time. You going, Richland?' to the agitated man on his left.

'Now, if you please,' answered Richland in a choking voice, 'the lamps—or something—I think I'll retire.' And he began to fight his way blindly towards the stairs.

'He is hard hit,' said Henshaw, 'why didn't he consult me, the lunatic, before plunging? You're well out of the mess, Ralston. Let me congratulate you. I understood there were shares to your name in that musical syndicate.'

Marian could no longer sit still. But as she was rising to put some question, which might have startled herself and the whole room, Giulia clung to her dress. 'What name were those men saying? What name?' she asked in a toneless gasp.

'Harland—I fancy it was Harland,' said the other, sinking back on her chair. 'What other name?' insisted the actress; 'there will be many Harlands. Ask you the padrone of the house what other name.'

It was as much as the startled woman could do. 'My friend here,' she begun, and her breath stopped.—Mr Henshaw, busy with his own reflections, did not observe her emotion. 'What was the name of the—the great failure—the syndicate? Madame Cornaro wants to know; could you tell me?'

Mr Henshaw's lip went down maliciously. 'All these women gamble,' he said to himself; 'Pauline did —and does.'

'It is not exactly a failure, but the ground is shaking under Mr Lucas Harland—an immense company-promoter on your side. If you, or Madame, should happen to be interested, I would sell out for you anything you have. The Harland shares will go down like Niagara when this news is known. So far it's confidential.'

His harangue was cut by Marian's impetuosity. 'Come, Giulia,' she said, taking the Italian, and almost lifting her to the floor, 'come this instant. No, no, we have nothing to sell out—you don't understand. We can't stay longer. Giulia, come.'

Mr Ralston started forward. 'May I speak one moment?' he quivered. 'Not now—by-and-bye,' said Marian convulsively, tearing her hand from him.

Their host would see them to the carriage, and put them in with compliments which neither heard. Giulia, in a dead silence ever since Lucas Harland's name had been pronounced, sat still, and for a long while seemed unconscious that they were hurrying through the streets of Chicago. At length, she ventured to ask, 'Where are we going now, *mia cara?*'

'Going?' echoed Marian through the darkness, 'home—to England—to my husband, Lucas.' There was no voice nor any that answered. Marian repeated, 'To my husband.' As the carriage stopped, Giulia, clasping the cold hand which was opening it, said, 'I will go with you.'

CHAPTER XXVI

TURN, FORTUNE, TURN THY WHEEL

MR HARLAND was sitting in his library, at the desk which had once held La Farfalla's letters. Through the undrawn curtains he might have observed in his garden the effect of starlight on the snow, firm and sparkling, with an occasional shower of feathers from above; for the sky was yet stormy and the night wild. He observed, however, nothing except the change in his own skin from hot to cold and from ice to fever, an irregular thrill that went through him, stopped, and began again, interminably. The house was deadly quiet; the shadowed clearness of the room waited on his movements almost like a presence; he would have chosen to be in the dark. But papers, papers, piles of them, had been coming by every post, and they were around him where he sat—they overflowed the desk, invaded the floor, clung to the chairs, made a litter not unworthy of the battlefield on which he was fighting. They screamed at him with a thousand tongues; they flashed a sabre light into his eyes; they boomed unceasingly, cannon which vollied out fire and smoke. Fighting—but alone.

It is said by accomplished critics that under stress of passion men do not employ figures of speech. Some, perhaps. But men of Harland's disposition will think in such figures. He was blind to the glittering snow; what he fancied was the battle, and what he smelt was the sulphur that choked him. Had he no friend at all? Wootton, Jonathan, Ravenbrook? None of these could win, if he lost. Then, he muttered to himself with senseless, maddening exasperation, there is Latimer.

But Latimer was, and had always been, for his own hand; impossible to say whether he held good cards or bad—which side he was likely to take, and in how many shapes he would appear. If he, too, were not undermined, he could be Harland's saviour. At last, it all turned on this, which meant the triumph of Pauline over one of the two men, husband or admirer. And he did not feel sure of Pauline.

So many things had gone against him lately. The worst was a sinking at the heart, an infinite weariness, presentiments of defeat. He seemed unable to keep himself up, a spring was broken somewhere within. Who had let Conrad Henle into the meaning of the dramatic syndicate, ruined the contract with Elven, started the discussion which was now shrieking in all the newspapers? Where was Elven?—These companies so worked into one another—take out a stone, the arch might give way. Elven had been the first stone. Who next?

Lucas, mooning thus, with a resemblance to the madman who mouths and gibes at a dead wall, was seated with his face towards the window. Suddenly, in one corner, at an angle made by the bookshelves, he heard a sharp click, as of a key turning on the outside. He listened, sat up, and watched the panel move out of its place. A wild wind, tossing the snowflakes before it, entered; and along with it some one, draped in black, wearing a veil, the head and shoulders drooped under that tempest, snow on her skirts. Harland, wheeling round in his chair, but not rising, saw Marian Greystoke.

She made a step or two in his direction, and then could not stir. Putting up her veil, which disclosed a pale and suffering face, in which the eyes, exceeding wistful, were yet without tears, she said, just above her breath, 'Lucas, I have come back.'

'Did you go away with anybody?' he asked, controlling the words; but Marian knew the purple mask let down in an instant, which made them both strangers.

'Part of the way,' she answered, almost, one would

have said, archly, almost with a smile, or the flicker of one, on those pallid lips.

'Then,' said Harland, pushing back his chair, which fell to the ground with a clatter, and flinging wide the secret door, 'go the whole way.'

Their eyes met, not their hands. Marian put down her veil—the key slipped with which she had let herself in. Lucas bent down and picked it up. His wife, still seeing him, half turned in a stumbling walk, and passed through the door. He shut and locked it, and her step was heard on the snow while you could count eight or ten. Afterwards, silence, or the rattling of the wind at the shutter.

It had not lasted five minutes—this tragedy of divorce—not three. And in a most steadfast trance, Marian, leaving her husband at his desk again, the ocean of papers in act to mount above his head, went across the snow, out and along the road, away by Kensington Gardens, pushing through the drift, thankful the air was not shut in, but crystal cold. Her boots were soaked; the storm, which had whirled about all day, uncertain of its doings, began to fill the sky once more, and beat, and beat, on her face, her hands, her hair, buffetting the poor creature in its enormous freedom, pitiless but not cruel. She cared as little what the snowy winds could do to her, as if she were lying underground. They did not make her miserable.

'"Go the whole way," and he cast me out—out at the door by which I first left him; and there he is, with La Farfalla's ghost, in the room—the room!' This alone she could remember—nothing else. But by instinct she kept on her march through the night and the snow, past heavy-laden trees, white houses, into the places where a line of omnibuses moved, over a pavement all trodden into mire, away from the lights of the Metropolitan Station, by long garden walls, and on to the Uxbridge Road, where at length she stopped to consider.

The simple thing to do was staring her in the face. Lie down by these palings, in the lane, where the drift

was deep, let the snow fall, as it was already falling, on head and bosom, until it covered her, and wait so until the morning which would never come to her alive. Simple enough, but cowardly. 'I am not a coward,' said Marian, as she clung to the rails and wiped the snow from her face. No, she had done the heroic deed of a woman who, without counsel or encouragement, has owned herself in the wrong. She thought of Father Rudolph in these moments of anguish—and the day at Wynflete came back, the boat and the raging sea, and the friendship which the brothers had more than pledged to her; they would not have Marian Greystoke a suicide. It was quite easy to die. But she must live. Out of the thickening flakes, the wind, the dreary night, she plucked her soul, innocent now, with some real though inadequate sense of consecration. And gathering her garments about her, she went from the palings by a way she had gone before, up to Hillside Terrace.

The house had all its shutters closed—it was not far from midnight. In her little drawing-room Miss Raby, with a medical journal between her fingers, was resting from a late consultation. She, too, felt brave, but with the melancholy of a soldier whose companion has just been shot through the heart. Marian had disappeared; Letitia was distracted; the thunder had not spared Fenimore Place. She could only advertise or signal to the lost wife in vague terms, hoping her friend would see these messages in some newspaper, and not be utterly desperate. But of her advertisements no result was visible. The wound within bled; why, she asked, do we make life so hard for one another?

A nervous ring at the bell went through the tiny house; once, and no more. She flew to answer it. On the step stood a draggled apparition, dark against the snow, but upright; and a hand was stretched out. 'Will you take me in for the night?' said Marian, tremulously. Miss Raby's ear detected, in spite of the trembling, a resolute tone, not hysterical, not due to intoxicants. There was dignity in the attitude, and the drenched garments signified nothing. In another

moment, Miss Raby was clasping her and leading her in.

'I always said you would come back, Marian,' she exclaimed. 'This house is your own. Don't you remember I said it was, the first time you stayed with me?' And she kissed the frozen lips.

'I must tell you first,' answered the other, still on the doorstep. 'Yes, let me. I went away; I wanted to go on the stage. But I did not fall; I was kept from dishonouring myself. To-night—an hour ago—I went to Mr—to Lucas; he would not take me back; he put me out at the door. But I think I did right to go to him. Not, you know, if—if I had broken the marriage; I didn't, Lizzie—you will believe me.' This accent, almost calm, but piercing, went deeper than tears. 'You ought to believe me,' insisted Marian, 'I never deceived you?'

'My dear, I do believe you, and I thank God, your coming here shows that you mean everything good. Now let me take off these dripping things,' said Miss Raby. 'You will have to go to bed at once; and then something warm. To-morrow—'

'To-morrow, the new life begins for me,' said Marian, as they went upstairs. 'And the better life, Amen,' answered Miss Raby. 'We will battle it out together.'

Together, yes, in the spirit. Marian had other duties, which would not allow her to stay long in Hillside Terrace. When she parted from Giulia, at Euston, under the same roof which had seen her leave on the American expedition with Gerard and his brother, she begged for her friend's address. It was given, but with a strange reluctance. 'You will not let any other one know it,' said Madame Cornaro beseechingly, 'not your husband, or any of them. I always go out to give lessons. Please, not anyone.'

'Surely I will not, since you wish it,' said Marian. 'Only I will come and see you, and Zorzi. Mayn't I? Of course, I can't say what will happen. But if I live, you will open your door to me?'

Giulia's look was enough. On the voyage they had talked to pass the hours away, nothing intimate, no story of their lives. The Italian did not put a single question after Marian's cry, 'I am going to my husband.' As for the motive which led her back to this country, it was patent from the time that Mr Ralston had made his proposals to the younger lady. Madame Cornaro could get only a poor engagement, if any at all, on the other side of the Atlantic, and her boy was in London. That seemed to explain the matter. And, though Mrs Harland was utterly uncertain how things might fall, she intended, were the chance given, to do her utmost for the mother and the child. After last night, now that Lucas had disowned her, their remembrance offered the only solid ground on which to begin a life—beyond death—a service in the fulfilment of which duty went with inclination. She was resolved to earn her bread as a singer. Why not make her home with Giulia and Zorzi?

Giulia had hidden herself away in a little street of ten or twelve houses, which delighted in a tree—a rather magnificent beech now heavy with snow. A street on the North West, where gardens flourished in due season, and there was silence most of the day. When Marian knocked, the third afternoon from her farewell to Lucas and Fenimore Place, her summons called out, after several minutes, a lad whose curly black hair, sallow skin, and smile of a bewitching openness, told her that she had not mistaken the house. 'You are Zorzi,' she said to the boy, as he stood there, not very tall, but slender and lissome, with large dark eyes, waiting until she should speak. This announcement took him by surprise. '*Già, Zorzi,*' he exclaimed, showing his pleasant teeth, '*Che dimanda la signora?*'

'We will talk English,' answered Marian. He nodded. 'Please say to mamma that Mlle. Jasmin would like to see her.'

He repeated the name, and ran somewhere into the back. There was a second interval before Giulia appeared. She looked paler than even in Chicago, and

was oppressed with some feeling akin to fear, which took all the spirit from her voice.

'You are come alone, are you not?' she asked, peering up the street, as if uncertain. 'Not brought some other?'

Her friend had a strange look, sadder than the day they met on board the *Golden Fleece*.

'Don't be afraid,' she made haste to answer, 'I am alone. Always shall be alone now. Mrs Harland is—buried,' she went on with a drooping gesture. 'No one is left but poor Jasmin.'

'What did Mr—your husband—do, when he saw you again?'

'The thing he would do, I suppose, to a linnet that flew out of its cage. He shut the cage against me; I might fly where I liked. Giulia, will you give me a trial, teach me, bear with me till I can earn my living? I won't be a burden on you. My friend, Miss Raby, has lent me the money to begin.'

Madame Cornaro was observing her with most expressive countenance. Behind, in the dusk of the passage, Zorzi had crept up, intent on this dialogue. He pulled his mother's sleeve now, when she was evidently feeling about for the best words, and whispered vehemently, '*Madre mia*, let the signora come. She has such beautiful eyes. Let her come, I say.'

'The infant is right,' exclaimed Madame Cornaro. 'Come, we will have the same house, the same table. You poor linnet! So he shut the cage to keep you out! Ah, he would do that. He would not care.'

'You mean they are all alike—they won't forgive,' said Marian, struck with her animated tones of disgust and pity.

'I mean what I mean,' was Giulia's very Italian answer, in which a strong affirmation says much but reveals little.

'And you and I, Zorzi, are going to be fast friends? Mother travelled with me over the sea and back again,

you know,' said their new inmate, as they all three moved into a bright little room, with its outlook on an old countrified garden, now a fairy tale of crystal branches and snowy evergreens. It was here that Giulia played, sang, practised when she did not go out to her pupils.

'I know, I know,' said the boy. 'Oh, it was so long while mamma went away. I was always dying of it. Tell her not to go any more.' He bent, and with a pretty gesture—he was surely a page out of some banquet by Veronese in his childish costume—kissed Mlle. Jasmin's hand. Veronese? But the lady felt, as one does in the baffling clouded reminiscences which we can neither complete nor identify, that somewhere, a long time ago, her hand had been kissed in the same courtier-like fashion. Whatever it was, the bat's wing touched her and was off again. She turned to Giulia, 'I shall be asking you not only to train me, but to disguise me. When I go out to sing, I dare not show myself as the woman who was—his wife. Can you help me to make up? That is the horrible word. Why do you look at me so earnestly?

Giulia shook her head and sighed. 'Ah, Carina, you cannot see how much—how very much—you are changed, even now, from that woman. I shall help you; it is an easy thing; but they—those friends of yesterday—what will they know, when you sing to them, so altered? Have no fear; sorrow it is that makes a different face.'

'Mamma says to me—don't you, when I am a bad boy?—that I have another face, an ugly one,' said Zorzi, climbing on a chair and looking in the glass,' I wish I could make it when I want. Is it this, mamma?' pulling his eyebrows one way and his mouth the opposite.

'No, no,' said Giulia, laughing uneasily. 'Get down again, cattivo.' I will not teach you the face. Try not to have it. A very ugly face. Ask the Madonna to take it away and put it in a box. It will not go into Paradise, that face!'

'How old is your Zorzi?' asked Marian, stroking his dark curls.

'I am twelve,' said the lad, drawing himself up, 'shall I be a fine tall man, signora? Sometimes I think yes, and then mamma thinks no. If I am tall, I will be a soldier. My uncle is a soldier in the Italian army—a bersagliere, but he is not so tall as I want to be. Mamma, was father tall?'

'He was not a chatterbox,' answered his mother. 'Make the fire, and we will give the signora some tea. Let me show you the little chamber we have for you,' she went on, opening the door for Marian to pass out.

And while they were upstairs, she said, with downcast eyes, measuring her words carefully, 'Zorzi does not know. But you should know. I was never married. His father—you will not speak about any father to him. And'—with a broken voice—'will you be ashamed to stay here, now I have told you this? I was younger then—I have done the best for my boy.'

'You dear Giulia,' said Marian, kissing her impulsively, 'what do you take me for? If I have not done wrong in one way, I have in another. Besides, didn't you save me when I was bewitched and almost overcome by the thirst of death, as you called it—an awful thirst? We will live together and take care of Zorzi. But is it wrong to ask whether—the man—is still living?'

'He is living,' answered Giulia; her reply came after a long silence. 'It makes nothing to us; he might be dead, we should not feel it. Come down now.'

'I was trying to make the ugly face,' said Zorzi, laughing when they entered, 'but it will not. I am too good to-day. To-morrow, if I am bad, we will see.'

They sat round the table; and, for the first time since she had left Euston on her fatal voyage, Marian was without the feeling of grief and remorse that had struck its fangs into her at every turn. Here, on this desert island, where the timbers of a wreck seemed to lie, drenched in brine, she found herself one of a little company that had neither hope nor prospect save in

their attachment to each other. But—wonderful power of love—it made them happy under the pelting storm.

The new life had begun for her, and for them.

It is months later. Lucas, while the sky was descending over him—a coffin-lid underneath which he might, or soon must, be shut down without his ingots—had suffered Marian to pass, and hardly remembered that he had once a wife. 'She should have died hereafter'—the saying pleased him, though it drove a sharp point into his side. He was the Macbeth of an immense deal in speculation—the latest kind of royalty—and it was turning against him. What should he do, being at such an extremity. Consult the midnight hags?—otherwise Pauline Latimer and the influences she commanded, putting himself utterly in whatever hand she might clasp? Frantic with fear, Lucas would have taken her and her large fortune from Charlie, as a man snatches up a bucket of water to quench the flame that is setting his house afire. But she was light, and therefore unconquerable—a thing that flitted, danced in the air, whizzed about him in all the translucent bravery of her wings, and would not let herself be captured.

His former arts were all thrown away. Frequent at Vivian Lodge, he hinted of devotion, and threw out questions. 'Who made these mismatches among people? Had he not been a fool? She, too, not blameless?' And, with the right woman to share his interests now, what a stroke was possible? He insisted on her attending the solemn war-dance of his missionaries who were gathering to protest, with Mr Jonathan at their head, against the scandalous rumours which flew like thistledown over the fields where shareholders might be reaped—stories of permitted polygamy, tenderness to cannibal rites and obi-incantations, winking hard at strange, primeval, prehistoric observances, which, under the vague name of anthropology, fill learned men's volumes, but which also,—to put it as mildly and decently as one can—savour of 'legalism' and crystallise taboo. Mr Jonathan's doctrine of election pronounced boldly

that God would know His own, amid these unspeakable new Christians, and that works, in any case, were naught, a theory which, like many of its kind, satisfied the expounder without convincing the rank and file who would have to pay for it. The programme, they murmured, was an engagement to make the heathen Christian, not to pervert honest Europeans into shapes of man-devouring ghosts and woodland satyrs. There had been a violent interchange of arguments, histories, allegations, cut and thrust, reports and counter-reports. But the end of it all was a decline in Missionary shares. Very ominous!

At the crowded meeting Harland put up as his sword and shield of defence Mr Makepeace Ravenbrook, long known for his exploits of commerce and conquest in Central Africa. He had been Governor, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief; but resigning official connections exercised a sovereignty, which had no limits except his sense of danger to Mr Ravenbrook. With Lucas and Jonathan his friendship was intimate but observant—while their flag floated they might count on him. His rough unadorned speech, to the point, and frankly cynical, had a sincere ring about it; but his trump card on all these occasions was the word 'British Israel.'

To the couple of thousand before him, including Mrs Charlie Latimer, the Central African propounded a new reading of the Bible, in which Britons took the place and the inheritance of the Ten Tribes, whose descendants they surely were. From Samaria to the Scythians was but a step; the Sacœ mentioned by Herodotus were manifestly the Saxons; and, travelling by way of the Euxine, Poland, and the Baltic, they had made good their claim to this tight little island under Hengist and Horsa. But the proof had a double strand. Israel was to possess the gates of the sea; and Mr Ravenbrook multiplied citations on this head until the exhausted meeting felt ready to cry, 'Hold, enough.' That major proposition then was clear. Equally clear was it, as a shilling atlas would demonstrate, that the British kept the keys of the Channel, had locked the doors of the Mediterranean at

Gibraltar and Suez; made their coaling-station at Aden; hung out their banners at the Cape; ruled in Ceylon and Singapore; and from Australia would lord it over the Pacific. What conclusion followed, or could follow, except that Britons were Israelites—and this Company their strong right arm? For, observed Mr Ravenbrook, 'while it was a saying once that the flag covered the cargo, we have seen a hundred times that the missionary carries the flag. Where he goes the Bible goes with him; and trade does not lag behind. Support the missionary; then British Israel may be trusted to fulfil its civilising, humanising, Christianising task. We are not to be daunted by stories of cannibalism and a chief's twenty wives. Keep up the shares to a high figure; unite your efforts under a strong British Israelite management; and the sons of cannibals will become clerks in your warehouses, and their daughters will give lessons in your Sabbath Schools.' He ended with a hurricane of texts; and fanaticism bought next day, while perplexed humanity was uncertain whether to sell out. For the present, British Israel had rescued the syndicate from ruin.

But common rumour, which was here put down as a common liar, had behind it one who knew his own mind. Mrs Latimer's husband did not chafe or fret when Ravenbrook sent up the missionary prices; he felt sure they had no stay in them. An uglier storm was throwing dirty clouds into the sky. Harland, the universal speculator, had purchased estates for building, appealed to the thrifty bank-book of the artisan, the small tradesman, the gentlewoman with a jointure, the labouring people whose benefit clubs had failed, and who could not pay big insurance fees. All over England they had been canvassed, persuaded, caught; their earnings or economies were at one time on the right side of his balance. Where did they happen to be now? Charlie Latimer could tell, perhaps, although he had refused, over and over again, to have any concern in these landed and building enterprises. But many are the forms, deceits, and stratagems of men in the city. A day came when,

at the Golden Stairs, Pauline, nervous and even agitated, went forward to Lucas on his entering, and exclaimed tearfully, 'Oh, Mr Harland—no, I daren't call you cousin any more!—what have you done to madden Charlie? He was wild this morning; I think he could have beaten me—me, innocent me! He says you are—I don't dare to tell you what he says.'

'But you must,' answered Lucas, turning faint. His eyes were bloodshot; he slept only one night in three.

She stammered and hesitated. 'Perhaps I had better. Charlie, it seems, has been buying up shares in the "General Building and Insurance Company," of which you are chairman.'

'Well, the shares are in the market; I've asked him to buy them more than once.'

'Yes, and he never would. Now he has got a heap of them; and he talks of fictitious sales of property, cooked balance-sheets—I don't know the jargon; but it is deadly for you, Mr Harland.'

He sat down on the nearest ottoman, confused and silent. His nights in the library! Calculations of imagined figures! Dividends paid out of nothing! Always the money to the day, but in a stream the sources of which were drying up. They *had* dried up, unless some one would pour in fresh water.

'What is Latimer going to do?' he asked in a dull voice. 'You, Pauline, can't you—?'

'Charlie is unmanageable,' she whispered. Jealous—actually, of you—a friend we have considered as our relative. Oh, he is so changed, you wouldn't know him—I advise you to make terms. It may be too late. Go and see him now; but, for Heaven's sake, don't anger him. Of course, if the accounts will bear investigation, there is nothing to fear; but still, I would not put him on his mettle, if I were you.'

Lucas went down the Golden Stairs for the last time, his crest low, but in a rage that was capable of pitching husband and wife into a furnace and watching them burn. He did not believe a single syllable of the

woman's story, except this, that Latimer meant to have his blood. The pirate-temper of speculation was well known to him. '*A la guerre comme à la guerre*,' had been his own proverb. This gilding of friendship might hide rottenness; that did not amaze him. But how far would the game go? To his ransom at the biggest price squeezable out of these transactions? Or farther still—to demands for publicity—the court—and—? He shut the future out resolutely, letting down upon it a curtain of sheet iron, as to keep off the flame. If it were only plunder that this man wanted, enquiry would yield less than suppression. Why should he lust after anything besides? A jealous husband—ay, granting that he was jealous! The motive which had taken root, flourished, grown to this towering height, from Harland's marriage, did not show whence it sprang to the bewildered Company-monger. He had no attachments, except to money, that acted with all the force of instincts, unappeasable by mere lapse of time. The hidden venom was safe against his antidotes, for he could not conjecture what it was.

'I am an honest man,' said Charlie, when Lucas talked. 'These shares—you know I would have none, though you offered them cheap. Now, in the way of business I buy a quantity; some of your fellows blab—well, if it isn't blabbing, why not have the thing out? It must come out. It ought to come out.'

'Take as many of my shares as you like and join us on the Board'—it was a novel sight, this daring Lucas Harland, ashy pale, and a hand which his fellow-man, represented by Charlie Latimer, declined to touch, as defiled or already in irons.

'Either you've got the funds,' answered his conqueror, 'in which case you can do without me on the Board; or you haven't, and the public ought to know. That is my ultimatum, and common sense into the bargain.'

'How many days will you give me?' asked the other, fumbling with his coat.

Charlie had his sentence in waiting. 'I cannot be a

party where the law may tell us that a felony has been committed. The matter is in your hands, not mine. But I shall take a fortnight to think over my next proceeding.'

At Fenimore Place, Letitia, always lying down since Marian's departure, and commonly in a state that left her mind to suffer while her body seemed to be asleep, heard Lucas enter the drawing-room. His step betokened trouble.

'What is it?' she said, unclosing her eyes. 'Have you heard or seen anything of Marian?'

He uttered an oath, 'What do I care about Marian? Don't mention that name to me, do you hear? But, Letitia,' softening his angry voice and almost breaking down, 'you warned me, two years ago, to beware of Latimer. How did you guess he was laying traps for me?'

The shock almost brought her to her feet. 'I guessed, because he was in love with your wife.'

'What? In love? Not with Pauline but with Marian? You guessed that? An insanity! He—so jealous of Pauline that he has sworn to destroy me? Marian? You don't know what you are saying.'

'I know, and have known, from the first day I saw them in this room together. Mind, Lucas, I do not say she was in love with him. A woman seldom mistakes. When she was there, he had no eyes for anyone else. And you would not see it! Oh, how blind men are! But he is acting at last; what does he threaten?'

'He threatens me with a judge and jury; with the felon's dock.'

'Could it come to that?' murmured Letitia, falling like one dead into her chair.

'I don't know,' said Lucas hoarsely, and the step retreated, slowly as it had advanced,

'I must send for Miss Raby,' thought the sister, 'at once; I shall go clean out of my mind. We are under a curse. Our honour is gone to chaff and ruin. O, Marian, where are you? And Rosie—and Harry Oberlin? Lost, lost! It is the curse of money!'

More than half of the fortnight had slipped away, moment by moment, falling into a gulf whither Harland was tempted to follow it. Every day, Latimer went down to his office, looked that all went as he gave orders, bore himself imperturbably; and the door would not open through which his prisoner should creep, asking a respite. 'This fellow will die game, after all,' he muttered, 'but, die he shall, when he has stood in the pillory, and drunk down shame to the dregs.'

A card was brought him. 'Miss Raby, the woman-doctor? What can be her business with me?' She might have a message from Lucas, who would not expose himself a second time to the dishonour which he had been compelled to endure in that room.

'Show the lady in,' said Latimer. His own spirits were buoyant; extraordinary good luck had fallen upon him within the last ten days.

The lady came in, walked up to his desk, and threw aside her veil. It was not Miss Raby. 'Good Heavens!' cried the young man, leaping out of his seat, and running round to where she stood, 'you, Marian? Where, in the name of all that is holy, have you risen from?' He was grasping both her hands in a transport of astonishment, with swift beams of the old love darting from his eyes. She released herself gently, and drew back a little.

'I have risen—oh, what a true word, Charlie!—risen from the dead.'

'You are not back in Fenimore Place? Not gone to Harland again? I thought—it was the common talk for half an hour—that you were with Elven. But he seems to have been living at some place in Wales, his brother's monastery. The talk went out for want of fuel. What are you doing? Can I be of any service? I—or Pauline? Have you heard our good news? We have a boy, five days old. Congratulate us.'

'I do, with all my heart,' said Marian, her eyes brightening. 'Indeed, it is good news—the best you could give me. Yes, Charlie, yes; I come on a pros-

perous day, don't I? Give *me* a present, as well. You can afford it.'

He glanced at her suspiciously. 'I never sign a blank cheque, Marian. Something tells me you are not asking for yourself. For whom, then?'

'Be generous, Cousin. Lucas—'

'Not a word of him. Does he ask time, favour, terms? Let him come and beg them here, on his knees.'

'He is not asking. I am. Why drive him to disgrace? Haven't you wife, and child, and fortune, while he has none? Surely you are satisfied.' She touched his arm pleadingly. But it was now his turn to draw away.

'Ah, revenge is sweet,' he exclaimed, 'and you speak the truth. Neither wife, nor child, nor fortune. Why didn't he let Marian Greystoke alone? He is done, not a kick left in him. The unscrupulous villain! The sham, the fraud! And I must let him outrun the constable, must I? Well—' He seemed to be pondering alternatives. Marian waited, and an inarticulate prayer went up from the depths of her heart. She did not dare to hasten him.

'Well,' he resumed, 'I am not sure that I want him in the dock. As a man of honour, it is not my bounden duty to see the laws executed. But no wife! Harland has no wife. Promise me, Marian, that he shall never have a wife!' The man's rather damaged beauty was shining with a strange significance. If he were Michael trampling on the demon, his own angelic features had not escaped a sword-cut or two. He looked cruel—not the open-hearted Charlie Latimer of old.

His cousin was terrified. 'What do you mean?' she asked doubtfully.

'Promise you will never go back to the man. Let him live a widower, ruined, childless. You know well how false he was to you. Why, he would have snapped up Pauline, had she not been the clever woman she is, and a true wife. Say you won't accept his forgiveness?'

He has not forgiven me. I did go back, and he turned me out.' It was a hard confession, but she made it.

'And you will go to him again? Marian, why are women such damned fools? Now, I give you my conditions. Weigh them well. Go back, and I put the law in motion against Harland this very day. Pledge me your word that you never will—I let him off the rest. What are you going to do?'

She leaned heavily on the desk, overcome with the subtlest, fiercest, most insidious temptation she had yet encountered. 'He will not have me, Charlie,' was all she could say.

But he threw back his head disdainfully. 'Promise,' he cried, and struck the floor with his boot. A terrible pause; and then her words came,—

'Though I do not love my husband,—and I promised that I would love him,—yet, if he ever asks me, I will go where my place is—by his side.'

Her cousin watched the struggle, to see how it would end. Had it ended thus? 'You are a wonderful creature, Marian,' was all he said now. And, ringing sharply, when his confidential clerk came in, 'Write to Mr Harland at once that I will not wait the fortnight. Bring me the letter to sign.'

'Yes, sir,' replied his understudy. The letter was written, brought, signed.

'Put it immediately in the pillar-box,' said Latimer. And when the man was gone out, 'Shake hands, Marian, for the last time. We shall never meet again. Pauline must not be jealous. And there's the end of an old song.' He smiled and bit his lip.

'God forgive you!' said Marian, letting his hand fall.

She was gone again. But the last editions of the evening journals had a paragraph, coming none knew whence, which stated that the great Mr Lucas Harland's affairs were likely to be the subject of judicial investigations, at which disclosures of a singular kind might be anticipated.

Lucas himself sat in his library burning documents, selecting papers for his defence, meditating flight beyond the reach of extradition. He could not fix on a course; and the police were already watching that splendid castle of his, until he should come out or they be sent in. Neither he nor Letitia was aware that Marian had called on her cousin and brought down the catastrophe, meaning to rescue him. That was Miss Raby's doing. And perhaps Someone, greater than all these mortals, had given the sign.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE HALL OF JUDGMENT

THE Great Captain was down. His millions had melted, or ranged themselves on the other side; his companies lay broken, his allies were ruined. The common soldier, fighting in a battle of which he never knew the plan, must bleed and die, because of his faith in Mr Lucas Harland. From end to end of the Kingdom a cry went up; curiously, sadly mingled of voices old and young, refined and rustic—the usual slaughter of camp-followers was going on, widows, orphans, the plundered derelicts, whom it is pathetic to read about and stirring to the blood, as if many murders concentrated into one huge sensation, with circumstances horrible but picturesque. The fighting *Iliad* is no longer a thing of swords, or of shields clashed together; nay, it has exchanged the cloudy whirlwind through which cannon uttered their message for a smokeless powder, charged yet more with destruction, but suffering the particulars to be photographed—a notable advance! To fail for seven or eight millions is to lose a Waterloo in broad daylight. The fields are strewn with corpses; the booty is beyond reckoning; special artists send home their illustrations; literature wins a brilliant page; and some young Napoleon starts up to outdo the feats of his predecessor.

The millions—men and money—had lain defenceless before Mr Harland. They were his, for the law allowed him to take them. He would not plead guilty, even in his own mind, when the doors were closed and

he sat alone. If he had broken the law let it be proved. He was bankrupt—what then? The fortune of war! Three months, consumed in sifting the paper mountains he could not burn, had brought to light such skeins of combination as might baffle the expert. They baffled Lucas when he undertook to ravel them out; nevertheless, a man's lack of memory is no crime, and everyone of these threads, he maintained, was woven into the speculation honestly. If they talked of plotting, it was against him, treacherous, underhand manœuvres that he did not suspect, till they had stolen the life out of his enterprises. He could not name Charlie Latimer, who was but one claimant among many; nor, though he was sure of the assassin, had he yet a clue to the motive. It must be Pauline after all; nothing but the husband's jealousy would account for this hot and eager pursuit. Terms had been possible, were finance the only question. However, the law had taken up Latimer's cry; its dogs were upon the hunted Lucas; and the newspapers which he had fed were barking their loudest. Venal hounds!

Bankrupts were made in sheaves—long lists every week for months together, as after an engagement the dead and wounded are posted up. Among them Lord Wootton and the Rev. Edward Jonathan, but no Ravenbrook. It would even seem that on the morrow of his memorable speech, in praise of British Israel, Mr Ravenbrook had disposed of the Missionary stock which he held, taking his profit on the rise. The Abbot of Wynflete could not get away so easily. For years he and Lucas had sailed in one boat; the typhoon that struck them pitched peer and plebeian overboard into the boiling surf. Wynflete was in the hands of bailiffs; and the Lord Chancellor announced to the Upper House—consisting of two judges, a bishop, and the Foreign Secretary—that Hugo, Baron Wootton, had been on the Monday previous adjudicated a bankrupt. There was no such solemn advertisement of Mr Jonathan's downfall; yet its consequences went further, speading famine and death into ten thousand households. The preacher's eloquence had deceived even

the elect; they speculated on a firm persuasion of dividends for which, somehow, it appeared to them that the Bible was their warrant. Now the Bible had not uttered a word in commendation of Missionary Syndicates, but Mr Jonathan had, and the sacred volume was in his grasp while he sent swift angels to reap this harvest. Who could pretend that he was not sincere? He had beggared himself on the same arguments wherewith he charmed his flock. If his sermons all came now to this text, 'In poison there is physic,' he had taken the poison by way of setting an example to others. An address of sympathy was prepared, and the ladies of St Barnabas, with a small but distinguished percentage of their husbands, signed it, tears blotting out half their subscriptions.

No one proposed the like address to Mr Harland. The Millennium, it would be thought, could neither ransom nor excuse him. Public opinion demanded a scapegoat on the head of which to vent its righteous horror of speculation, as those magistrates birch little boys for playing at pitch and toss, who next day drive down to Epsom or Goodwood, and have a pretty taste in horse flesh. The philosopher does not sit on the Bench; had he done so, he might have issued his warrant against half the well-known people who first crowded to hear the story of these figures,—marionettes playing the game in which live men and women were represented,—and then rushed away into the other, the still more exciting arena, which saw Mr Harland charged with false pretences, embezzlement, and conspiracy. The other conspirators were persons of no account; their names heard now, for the first time, aroused neither interest nor indignation. John Doe and Richard Roe, left to themselves, would have defrauded not a soul. It was the gigantic promoter, the genius of speculation, the star of this constellation of companies, that went into visible eclipse. 'What have I done that others have not done equally?' he cried to his judges, but they had not the others before them, and he cursed his day.

The prison—for bail would not be accepted; nor, indeed, was it forthcoming—now put on the air of a refuge or shelter, in which, when the day's proceedings were at an end, he could lie, as a hunted animal whose earth had not been stopped. In dreams he went back to Fenimore Place, to Heathcote, to the old Northern Abbey. But everywhere, as soon as the vision fixed its lineaments, the trial began again, solid and palpable, with repetition of speeches, exactly as they had been delivered; and his own replies, interjections, and weary feeling of the injustice done to him. Still, when he woke, finding it no more than a dream, the respite from that court-house brought him a sense of relief. He pleased himself by lingering, as long as imagination would suffer it, in the old haunts, going from room to room, taking up the costly things and viewing them at leisure, calculating their price, gloating over their rarity. He would gladly have made the sensation last while he was in front of that wall-eyed magistrate, who saw nothing except under blinkers, although within a few yards of his chair the same deeds were walking about, large as life, insolent, unabashed, for which he was now going to commit Lucas Harland. But no sooner had the prosecution opened its unctuous lips than the vision fled away. There was no more Heathcote, no house in London—merely a forlorn prisoner, the sword of unrighteous justice hanging over his head.

Where was Marian all this while! Learning from Giulia what it cost to be an actress, having every day to brace up her spirits assailed by so many discouragements, lest in the failure to put on a bold front she should lose her chance and become a pensioner at this poor table. She could not take a holiday of mourning; duty forbade it. Those tears which she kept down enriched her expression, gave to her singing a colour so deep, so little affected, as to reveal new tones she had never before perceived; and in whatever house Mlle. Jasmin appeared, everyone

that had a soul for music wondered, asked her name eagerly, and went away with some snatch of her enchantments upon them. She would not be left to starve, so long as the impulse lasted. But it was like selling her heart for sixpences; a cruel commerce!

'You think too much of the woman still; not enough of the artist,' said Giulia, softly, on her complaining. 'Say, as I did say, in my hour, you loosen their hearts. Did not that English mother cry last night over your little tender song? She told me. "It does me good this crying; it is like as if I kissed my dead child once again." Was not that the price of your song? Not the money they gave you; oh, no!'

These assurances were comforting, and with the friendship of Giulia and Zorzi, they were all her comfort. It was no time to vex Harland by appearing in public near him, or renewing her petition that he, a homeless and accused man, would take her back. Miss Harland, she knew from Lizzie Raby, had been overset by the terrible day when Lucas was taken, and now resided under medical supervision, a little way out of town. Her mind was trembling on the verge of delusion. She must not see anyone. At Rylsford, what was there that Marian could do? The Greystokes had lost whatever value once attached to the missionary shares, but thanks to Lucas and his strict but generous handling of her father, the vicarage, with its income, was theirs yet. She had not written. She could not write. Her over-burdened mind shrank from correspondence. 'If I attempt more, I shall break down,' she reasoned. 'I must not break down. Lucas will have need of me hereafter,' but through Miss Raby she sent a vague message, bidding them not to be anxious. Marian was well; they should hear by-and-by.

To Harland she had no access now. During the wearisome hours of the examination in bankruptcy, Marian kept away from the court. When the new trial began, after his commitment by the magistrate,

Giulia, who shared all her friend's troubles, went whenever she was free and brought back tidings.

At last, on a certain evening, she said, 'You come with me to-morrow. It is the day of the sentence. Who knows what will happen?'

'You don't mean that Lucas might do something to himself?' cried Marian, appalled at the hint thus darkly conveyed.

'What do I know? Men are men. You should be there and let him see you. The surprise would make him think of something not so bad. Perhaps he would want your love again.' Giulia's eyes were full, and her voice trembled.

'What a good soul you are, Giulia!' exclaimed her friend. 'I could not make up my mind whether to go or stay. It was impossible for me even to guess what he would like, and how could I add to his suffering? But I will go.'

'And you will do right,' said Madame Cornaro. 'He—he is not the greatest of villains, I think. He would love you for it.'

They had no slight trouble in making their way within the court. Nor is it probable that they would have been admitted, so formidable was the press, had not Marian sent a message to Harland's counsel—the briefest, although it seemed to scorch the paper on which it was written—Might Mrs Harland, wife of the accused, be given a seat near him? The answer came quickly, and the two women, in their dark nun-like habits, found themselves among prison officers and men of the law, with a fierce sunshine striking on their close-drawn veils, and lending to the crowded room a passionate yet fatigued light, in the brightness of which glimmered and glittered the fashionable costumes worn by ladies, seated in the background, and come to witness the execution.

Harland—she saw none of his accomplices, but only a mist which wrapped them—stood, a little bent, pale, and with unsleeping eyes, his face to the Judge. He did not know that a few yards away was the woman he

had wedded and lost. Neither was he concerned at the assembly which his doom had called together. Among them, as Marian could not help seeing, were some who once begged admittance to her drawing-room with every device of flattery, intent upon profit and distinction. She had received these women at her table, they knew the taste of her bread, and here they sat watching the fifth act of her tragedy, curious and unpitying. Was Mrs Latimer in the wings? or Charlie? They did not appear; and for that grace she could have thanked them. Still it was Charlie's day, long prepared, and worse than death to his victims. For Harland was not the only one. He had stricken Marian Greystoke also.

A terrible sunlight, in the glare of which murder might be done, and would look most ghastly. And the Judge began his charge amid utter silence. He was a tall, thin, spare man, between seventy and eighty, with eyes like carbuncles in a face which had no colour and betrayed no feeling. His bushy white eyebrows and forensic wig matched as in a picture; the scarlet of his robes sickened Marian as though declaring openly that his office was vengeance. He allowed the prisoners to sit, and sometimes appeared oblivious of them, addressing the jury in confidential, easy tones, much as one teaching them the rules of an arithmetic they had not learnt. But no, he never did forget; everything in his dreadful harangue went home where it was aimed, and all at the one man beneath him, bent under his scourge, solitary in the presence of hundreds.

The passionless tone amazed Marian. She had dreamt of an emotion shaking them all in sympathy. What she, and doubtless all there experienced, was something more obscure, enigmatical, and effective. As the Judge went on, hour after hour, in his senile monotone, shaping out of these figures, documents, witnessings, inferences, a story that gained consistency and substance with every touch, that grew before their eyes, and put on flesh, and spoke to them audibly, and hunted off the boards all other interpretations of the prisoner's doings, it seemed to her that the mortal man who was telling it

gradually disappeared, and in his stead there sat on the bench, visible and incarnate, the Fortune of Lucas Harland.

His Fortune, outside of him, opposed to him, passing sentence on him. The Fortune that was his child, his creation, born of his brain and heart, dowered with his cunning, alive with his motives, nourished on the food he had given it, snatched from far and near. The Fortune that he doated on, remembered in his dreams, worshipped with delight and trembling—a god of his device, fearfully like its maker, and yet independent, stubborn, fickle, slippery — the slave grown to be a tyrant. Now, in icy monologue, it revealed its own nature, murmured, accused, betrayed the man; it let the whole world into the secret of his lies, and cruelty, and meanness, and greed, and lust of power; but it gloried in its betrayal. The Fortune had flaming eyes, was red with blood, turned mercy itself to rage, knew nothing except to devour him who had made and nourished and crowned it. And these officers listened, and jurymen took notes, and ladies fanned themselves, and the sun glared into every nook, and the prisoner had no voice. The phantom which he made was unmaking him in an ecstasy of enjoyment. But he did not speak.

Again, as the hours swept by in this red procession, it was borne in upon the listening wife that the Thing which sentenced her husband wore a semblance of La Farfalla, thrown upon it like pallid moonbeams from the syndicates of pleasure which danced their dance, their ghostly Carmagnole, about its feet. The guilt of all those years had a grin and a smirk in it, an odour of ballrooms, and a reflection from the lamps kindled on the modern stage: it flung round itself a tattered garment patched of theatrical properties, and dealt in a mimicry, so awful in its dead and alive struggling, of the amusements it had patronised as to put to shame the horror of blood, and seem yet more detestable than murder. And then came across it a scent of religion in decay, of putrefying superstitions; it was cant with

a text in its mouth and leprosy in its bosom—the holiest besmirched, fouled, stuffed with falsehoods, adulterated and put up to sale for the good of trade; the Heavenly Jerusalem, let into a prospectus, and sold by the square yard. And always he that evoked this monster was Lucas Harland. Had his wife sat on the jury, when the Judge's charge fell silent, she must have brought him in guilty, dismissing the so-called conspirators as tools and instruments. What would these twelve men say, unknown to her yesterday, of no consequence a few weeks ago to Lucas, and some of them brushing past him on their road to business, strangers yet, although destiny was bringing them to a focus in which he should be consumed? They would listen to his Fortune against him; surely that was coming—and afterwards?—

The jury were led out; the Judge retired to his private apartment and a glass of Burgundy; Harland followed his gaolers. A chattering as of kites and crows, expectant of what was to fall upon the battlefield, broke out everywhere, especially among the choice toilets and in the mincing, fashionable tones. These women with steel nerves under their skin, which looked so dainty and delicate, were not affected by the hours spent in a close atmosphere, but went on chirping, twenty to the dozen, as fresher than their flowers, that drooped in a sad sympathy with the spirit of the place. Not so the tender sex, allured, intoxicated by a drama in which they, too, did they know it, were acting, and all their mad passion for amusement, show, do-nothing dignity, and the perfume of pleasure bought with someone else's hard slaving. They, as ignorant, as covetous, and as little disposed to blame their treble lust as any Lucas Harland, sat eating, drinking, trilling their foolish talk in a moment of doom, and wondered what was keeping the jury.

Marian and her Italian friend, both in a tremor which no resolution would overcome, had moved up closer to the dock. She wanted to be as near Lucas, when the jury was giving its verdict, as possible. So

still and absent an expression, which now and then she caught on his features while the Judge was summing up, disturbed her more than a violent outbreak would have done. It was new to her, and full of danger.

The twelve were coming into court again. The kites and crows held their peace. On the bench that tall, spare man, the carbuncles under his bushy eyebrows sparkling, his face pallid, his crimson gown burning to the sight. Harland, with his fellows, in the square compartment which had the likeness of a pen for sheep or cattle; and his wife almost near enough to touch him in a couple of strides, were the space between them free. A tension of all eyes and hearts. The question put—a series of questions; name called after name of the five men accused; and a low, dropping fire of answers, at every one of which a prisoner started, smiled vaguely, sucked in his parched lips, and brought himself full up again, as though he had been drilled. 'Guilty, guilty, guilty'—the tale did not cease until it reached Harland, whose name was last in the indictment; and he, bending lower than before, would not so much as glance at the Judge, now beginning to sentence them.

A Judge who had sentenced so many that he could now be calm, nor thought it his duty, as representing the Divine Righteousness, to dwell upon the crime he was sending into penal servitude. His conscience had delivered itself in the summing up. Moreover, what need to smite these unhappy with the rod of his mouth? In a few minutes they would be passing away from the sun, home and wife and children theirs no longer, life a hideous dream, out of which death alone could wake them, and society marking them with the brand of Cain. No preamble was required to these thunderbolts. The rest were sentenced. Only Harland stood waiting, the chief and great culprit, as he was now styled, whom the law would punish to the uttermost, not of his offences, but of its power as prescribed by Act of Parliament. The sentence was that he should be kept in penal servitude for the space of five years.

Scarcely had these words fallen from the Judge's lips —he was now discharging the jurymen—when Marian saw Lucas lift a hand which held she knew not what. It was a moment of confusion. How she rushed through the police, by what miracle she had reached the prisoner's box, impossible to say or describe. But she was there, gripping the hand with something in it, pulling it from the man's mouth, dashing it to the ground, whence arose a faint sickly smell, ever after unendurable in memory.

'Let go, you devil,' exclaimed Harland, as the flask went from him. He tried to strike her, but the blow was arrested on the brass rail of the dock. He saw who it was, and she looked into his dreaming eyes. 'Oh, Lucas, Lucas!' was all she could say. The police were thrusting her back angrily. The Judge had interrupted his address. 'Who is that woman?' he asked in a stern undertone. Harland's counsel replied, 'It is his wife, my lord,' and the rumour flew round the Court, wakening a chorus—astonishment, curiosity, wonder, and, at the last moment, pity. 'His wife—he was trying to poison himself—prussic acid—no one suspected such a thing—so well conducted throughout—the Judge is going—his wife?—didn't she elope? With a musician or somebody?—Where has the woman turned up from?—but, poor thing, his wife! Well, a splendid curtain, don't you think?' The kites and the crows went screaming over the field.

His gaolers would not give Harland another chance of escaping from them by this postern gate. They handcuffed him and he disappeared out of Marian's vision, but never once did he look her way again. He was gone, with his last words ringing in her ears. From the rows of fashionable women not one came down to where she stood with Giulia. They went out into the thundering street. It was towards four o'clock. Cabs were snapped up by the well-dressed audience; and there the two waited, as on a pillory, crowds eyeing them, until they could arrest a driver and, getting in, pull down the blinds between themselves and the world. Madame Cornaro was as pale as Marian and in a flood of tears.

But she had not lost heart. 'I said you would save him and you did,' she murmured over and over again while they were driving to her house. 'What would you feel to-night, when the papers told you he was dead, if you had not come? Oh, thank the Lord God I made you come.'

'I do thank Him,' replied her friend. 'And you—it was your doing that I came. We can always remember it. Lucas will have time now. If I helped to ruin my husband, I have helped to save him from suicide.'

'It would have been worst of all,' said Giulia, 'worse than the dark prison.'

When they arrived home in a state of excited weariness, fresh trouble met them at the door. Their little English servant came running out, and said, 'O, ma'am, your boy, Georgie, has not come in yet. The school-inspector was after him. He has been playing truant all day. I don't know where's he's got to!'

Madame Cornaro sat down helpless and burst out crying again. 'Ah, *cielo!*' she sobbed, 'to-day of all days! What will I do? He breaks my heart, the bad boy, the wicked boy!'

'Shall we go and look for him?' said Marian, sitting down by her, and feeling as if all her bones were broken. She could have cried for company, but, courage! Women ought not to weaken one another in this futile way.

Giulia looked round at her, 'Where would we go to find the *malandrino?*' she exclaimed, shaking her head, 'He runs all over London; he would be sailing in some boat on the stream, I know not where.' For you gave him the pennies. Ah, he will kill me, *figlio di brigante!* And I so fatigued!'

'Let us eat something, then, and rest,' said Marian, 'a lad of his age who knows London will not come to any harm. We can scold him well as soon as we catch him.'

However, they were only set down a few minutes when the boy's light step was heard in the hall, and he pushed the door open, swinging his cap in his left hand, all flushed and excited. He gave a shrewd glance

towards Marian, threw his cap on a chair, and waited until his mother began to speak. She was very angry, in part from the reaction of that long day's strain. And with a sharp, good-natured volubility, she poured out on the boy a flood of Venetian epithets that scalded like hot water. Zorzi listened awhile, rather expecting that his friend the Signora would interpose. But as she kept silence, and no tea was forthcoming, he burst out at length, 'I was a bad boy all day! Very well. I will finish the day a bad boy, and go with some villains in the street. What did I do, mamma? I did not go to school. It is too hot in school now.'

'Where did *you* go, then, you wicked one, torment of my heart? Ah, Zorzi!' Zorzi laughed a knowing kind of laugh.

'Where did you go, mamma?' he echoed. 'You went, not once but many times. Why should I not go also?' And his eyes triumphed in an unanswerable question.

'Why, why, you never did follow us this morning?' said his mother in amaze.

'But I did. You rode in the cab. I heard you say the direction—to the Courts. I have been in the Courts before. I know a policeman there—his mother was an Italian, like mine. No, not like mine; there is no mother like mine,' stroking her hand, but Giulia was still angry and snatched it away. 'Very well. I know the policeman. I say to him, "Let me go in after those ladies; I am their boy." And he makes room in a corner where I squeeze in. I saw everything. I saw the Judge; he had a red cloak on, and white hair—so funny! And I saw the men—the brigands. And I saw you, Signora, when the tall brigand wanted to eat something, and you would not let him. I liked not that brigand; ugly face, he always looked on the ground. See, mamma, a face just as this.' Zorzi thrust his head forward into the light, and began to mimic Lucas Harland.

He did not observe, in his boyish eagerness, that Marian had let her hands fall across her knees, and was

intent upon every gesture he made. 'That was the brigand's face,' he said merrily, 'I will make it again.' And close to her eyes Mrs Harland saw and recognised an outline, an expression—the mask, not so deep in its purple, but too clear to be mistaken—which had struck upon her less than two hours previously, when she was snatching the poison from her husband's lips. How had she never noticed it since her arrival in this house?

'Good God!' she exclaimed in a voice that died under the excitement, and laying both her hands upon Giulia's shoulders. 'You are La Farfalla! And this lad—this lad—'

'What did you call me?' The Italian was on her feet, and her hands went up in astonishment.

'La Farfalla, La Farfalla! It is you. Say it is you. Surely it is you!'

'But who told you that name? Not he—not Lucas? How could you know it?' Zorzi had left off making faces and was watching the scene, eager to understand. Marian caught a glimpse of his burning eyes.

'You shall have your tea, and run into the garden,' she said quietly, 'but promise me not to play truant any more?'

'La Farfalla—that is a butterfly,' said Zorzi, 'Why do you call mamma butterfly? She is not yellow; she has no wings.'

'Little boys must not ask questions, especially if they play the Charlie Wag,' answered Marian. 'Now drink your tea and be off. Not another word.'

He was used to obey the beautiful English lady, whose manner was firm as well as affectionate. And since he could not talk, he soon slipped out of his chair and was in the garden, singing a stave now and then from the operatic airs which Madame Cornaro practised. They heard him, sometimes close to the window, and again at a distance, under the trees—a young voice, coming and going, that made the green nook melodious like a nightingale's nest.

Then Mrs Harland told Giulia the story. It was a

very sad one, the tender-hearted woman thought. 'And so,' concluded Marian, 'I lost my child, but you have yours. I cannot complain. He ought to have married La Farfalla; that was what I felt, and feel. But he said you left him.'

'I did leave him, dear lady. I could not do anything but leave him. It is so long ago; the days are deep down in the sea, so that I know not how it was with us. Why should I remember them? He did not want me any more, that is certain. You read the letters; did you not see in them all my rage, all my sorrow? He was a cruel man to me, and I feared to let him know when Zorzi was to be born. I thought, either he will hate him, or if he loves my child he will take him from me. I had a companion, not a great singer, but beautiful and adored, and the man took her child. So I went away and hid myself, and it was for Zorzi's sake I left the Opera and gave lessons about here, in a part where none would know me. Harland said to you I was perhaps married—at Venice—it is false—I never did marry any man. What is more, ever since my boy came to me, I would not look at a man. That is the truth.'

'He must not know. I will be careful never to mention La Farfalla again,' said her friend, after a pause. 'You, Giulia—will you let me have a share in the boy? I am a widow now. Let him belong to us both.'

Zorzi came in gaily from his singing and roaming. 'See, mamma,' he cried, 'a lovely Farfalla—not yellow—but crimson, purple, and such shining black on its wings. It is for you. I am tired of being a bad boy; won't play truant any more.'

'You have crushed it,' said his mother, tenderly. And it was so; the butterfly lay dead in his hand.

Zorzi felt astonished at the kisses they both showered on him; he thought how easily Charlie Wag had got off that day.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FRONDE NOVELLE

THERE is an ancient legend, twisted and curled into queer arabesques by that laughing, crying genius, Master Heinrich Heine, of the gods once fleeing from their Olympus and hiding themselves before the wrath of Typhon in brutish forms among the Egyptians—whence the worship of animals on the banks of Nile. Something not unlike had befallen our leading characters. From a mountain height of splendour, fashion, wealth—from palaces and country seats, from parks, and preserves, and the sacred enclosure which no plebian step tramples—they were come down, Lucas to a prison, his wife to performances in a drawing-room, with some distant outlook towards the stage. And Lord Wootton, the throned and sceptred Zeus, heir to so many generations of deities, nectar-fed in halls Olympian, had lost everything which entails and settlements did not tie up. He was a bankrupt peer, in dingy London lodgings, who might envy the lot of Apollo, cowkeeper to Admetus. But Apollo—that is to say, Gerard Elven—where was he? Let us hope with a master not too hard upon him. He carried his music always wherever he went; he could pipe on the hillside and turn his sorrows to sweet pathetic elegies. We will not lament much over him.

But Typhon raged—the red-haired, the malignant. He roared through a thousand newspapers, daily, weekly, in the United Kingdom, in America, North and South, in the islands of the sea, against that monstrous cheat, Harland, let off with a poor five years' penal servitude. He called the missionaries in their squadrons

and regiments; presided over Relief Societies, sent out a plague of circulars, made himself the mouthpiece, guardian, avenger of myriads brought to beggary, while these gods quaffed their immortal beverage, and flung their bolts of death upon a credulous generation. He was a fine, rude figure—this loud-speaking Typhon—an embodiment of the cardinal virtues, and such a tender heart. Nevertheless, to put it plainly, an idiot. For he attacked the gods, but not the system that made the gods. And if Harland could have seen these diatribes and begging-letters, he would have said, with the skull which has a motto in its jaws, *Hodie mihi, cras tibi.* He was the victim of a social order so stupid and illogical that it broke him on the wheel for acting up to its standard.

Lucas, however, did not know what Typhon was doing or saying. He walked and worked in the company of other dead men, or else, a speechless, haggard wretch, sinking lower than dreams, lay on the floor of his cell—alone, alone. The visions of the past grew fainter and fainter. His faculties dropped off, one after another, in curious but strict succession, as a man's limbs eaten by leprosy, The physician that kept careful note—were any at his elbow—might have confirmed or confuted the doctrines now in vogue, touching our mental construction or building up, from the inverse process, the unmaking of man, familiar but too little heeded, in our penitentiaries. First, accomplishments, then good manners, next moralities, after that, energies, lastly, the appetites themselves, brought down below freezing-point. Hunger, lassitude, broken nerves; nothing clear or palpable; the hallucinations in which substance seems to have escaped out of reach, and existence is a dreary sleep—a dog-sleep, with phantom gaolers not suffered to be kind if they would. This, not one day, or week, or month, but endlessly and always. Had Typhon endured three years of it, he would perhaps have judged Harland more leniently. And the sentence ran to five.

Yet a dull feeling remained, as poison oozing from

the mouth of a corpse. It was hatred to Marian. She —she and none other—had dragged him to this death. He forgot the look of his former homes; people melted into a luminous fog; schemes and speculations were as good as blotted from his memory; but the woman who had left him on some punctilio, despising his wealth, glad to be quit of him and it, was present now, hateful in the extreme. She had taken the place of La Farfalla; she was his bad luck, the cause of everything that had come to pass. When she begged an interview, he fell into epileptic frenzy. She must never be admitted; the sight of her would drive him mad. She went to the chaplain and entreated his assistance; she found a noble heart, a clear head, and boundless compassion; but he told her, 'You must harden yourself to this, also; it is for you to suffer, alone, as he is alone. Take pity on him; go your way until the bitterness of death is past. I will let you know whenever he has come, if, please God, that happens, to a more human stage.' She had to leave him.

It was part of her punishment. Had not Rudolph warned her in the railway carriage? besought her not to forsake a sinking man? and prophesied the evil which went through attempted suicide on to the Arctic winter, in which death reigned triumphantly? Oh, she was scourged on face and shoulders—driven from the gaol—her consolation would have been there, in such a place —condemned to act and sing when her heart was breaking. How little the world knows, she thought, of the melancholy folk that amuse its vacant hours! She came into their intimacies, went to the back of the curtain, and learned what fine acting means, as her acquaintance grew among men and women of the theatre. With it grew her comprehension, her pity for the immense, lugubrious, little seen play behind the play, ever going on, a medley of real and fantastic, in which the art of dramatizing passes over into life, and all the hungers of the soul clamour to be satisfied—but the few come forth victorious, and which among these is not wounded?

She learned from La Farfalla what may be termed the trade secrets, the tricks, traditions, usages—a deeper sort of making up, that went even towards creating a second nature, and transformed her beyond recognition. It was more than she had guessed in the way of payment for apprenticeship; and in her dreams she struggled to get the old self again out of the clutches of the new; but the substitution lasted on, until that Marian Greystoke was unframed, dissolving into reminiscence. Mlle. Jasmin had no antecedents. She was a voice out of the dark that sang and was by and by mute, and then forgotten, or thought of as we call to mind some moving passage, the author of which we could not name.

Better so. Except for the piling up of money, what did she want with advertisements and paragraphs, interviews and notoriety? But she was resolved not to be rich again. She had gone through that furnace. On the other side, there was a motive, which required delicate handling. The temptation to rescue Lucas by promising that she would never be his wife any more, failed, as we have seen. Another trial, springing from her sense of compunction for his victims, came upon her. If she rose to the fame and greatness that Giulia declared were within her grasp, thousands of pounds would flow in—the Ralstons of Europe and America had them ready; she might subscribe to Typhon's charitable endeavours, and head his lists. Why not? Mrs Harland's name would make a sensation; her acting be justified by conscience-money.

But no, she saw through the snare. Art was a consecration—the rest commerce. Elven had seen it long ago. To earn one's bread was duty;—more than that, though gilded with the finest gold, was Harland's doctrine of 'business is business,' which had sent him to Dartmoor and his dupes to the workhouse, the asylum, or the grave? A singular vision of society unlike the present dawned upon her; she began to construe the phrase so dear to Mr Browne Vandyke, 'Art

for art' in a fashion he would have branded as insane. Possibly, said Marian to herself, Art is not amusement but religion, and to grind it into gold dust little better than a traffic in holy things. She made up her mind against Mr Ralston. She refused brilliant bargains. She spent on a poor soul here and there what was left from her earnings, and saw that Giulia had rest, and that Zorzi got a fair education. But her name did not once appear in Typhon's balance-sheet. This, for a woman with such instant response to suffering in her heart, was difficult virtue. And only the remembrance of Lucas, consumed and consuming in the hell of modern commerce, steeled her to fortitude.

He was in that hell; nor did he shrink from any torment so much as from the visit of an angel, whose wings, that she thought cooling, would have fanned out fire upon his eyes. The years, the years went by. On the wide battlefield the groans were not so audible, and the ambulance ceased to go about. Twenty lines in the paper dragged Lucas from his den, but not often, as a witness in the complicated windings-up that succeeded his bankruptcy, the fall of these many syndicates, and the dispersion of the missionaries. A reporter would describe him as looking well, though condemned to face the court in a harlequin's jacket, stamped all over with arrows—the grotesque mingling by law with the horrible. Then he sank into Hades, and a snowstorm of new prospectuses covered him as he was falling. He looked well—to the owl-eyes of the reporter. He was not well. The inside had been eaten out of the man; a shell remained, florid and deceptive. The fine clear brain was becoming a heap of burnt-up cells. Lucas Harland would never speculate any more.

In the journeyings upon which he was ordered, to and fro, with his turnkey attached to him, the convict had been drafted to Wormwood Scrubs, when three years were over. The chaplain was Mr Incledon, who had seen him at his earlier period, and thanks to whose kindness Marian received, from time to time, the scanty

information there was to convey. He now sent her an urgent message. Lucas would not take it unkindly if she asked an interview; but, said Mr Incledon, when she called on him in town at his request, there was another consideration. She turned her gaze upon the chaplain with sorrowful anxiety.

'You wish to tell me that he his dying?' she said.

'Ah, that would be easier,' replied the clergyman with a sigh. 'No, my feeling is that, although Mr Harland could only get good from seeing you, I am doubtful whether you should be exposed to the shock. Could you bear it?'

'I am his wife,' she said gently, not as boasting of her strength or resolution.

'Yes, and you would have the courage that is founded on true human relations—the grace of your state. I know. But there it is that our prison system breaks down. It is artificial, anti-human; no true relations are possible in it, except among the prisoners themselves. And they must creep through the meshes. Your husband is a sad example of what the prison makes, but the law does not ordain.'

'Tell me about him,' said Marian, 'I can bear anything but suspense and ignorance.'

'I will. The striking quality in Mr Harland was—you will agree with me—an intense imaginative absorption in his plans. Finance must have acted upon him as poetry or adventure does upon other men. I saw him, knowing so much as this, when he had been several months in gaol; and my first word to him was, 'Mr Harland, there is only one advice I can offer you—while you are here, be patient.'

'Well, you could not have said more wisely,' interposed Marian.

The chaplain continued, 'Your husband looked at me. He was standing up in his cell, and such light as came through the shadowed bars fell upon his face. "No, sir," he answered—not immediately, the response was feeble, as it is in many prisoners, to stimulus from without—"No, sir, the hard thing here is to have any

feeling at all." His glimpse into the system went deeper than mine.'

It was a revelation, abysmal in horror. 'How far has it gone?' asked the wife, whispering. Mr Incledon took some minutes to reply. His features, alert and kind, put on the physician's thoughtfulness, and Marian felt in an obscure way that he was contemplating a scene which lay outside her own prospect.

'Realise the change,' he said at last. 'Here is a man, of sanguine, hopeful temperament, sensitive to music and other less tangible impressions, but, on the one hand, full of business which taxes the brain, on the other, incapable of resting on what I may call inward thoughts. He must be fed—the mind as well as the body—or he will starve. The law takes him, puts him into a cell, denies him every possible occupation for months at a stretch; if he is to feed, he must feed on himself. The first consequence is fever; the final, apathy. I pray you have courage, my dear madam. Mr Harland has sunk, and sunk, until he cannot control his thoughts for many minutes; he speaks in a frightened whisper; he does not always know who is talking to him—and—I can't go on. Nothing short of a wife's devotion could endure to nurse him, as he is now.'

'But I will nurse him. Give him to me; let me take him home, and I will do everything. Oh, good sir—Mr Incledon—do the people understand that he is in this state? Are they so cruel as to know and keep him from me? Where shall I write? Tell me what to do. Surely they never mean to murder him.'

She could speak no more; the sobs would break out that were choking her. With hands and eyes she besought this man to pity Lucas; and she knew he pitied him, but she was asking governors, gaolers, the strong fingers that held her husband, to let him go. 'I will petition; I will get others to sign. When I have seen Lucas and told them they will, believe me, not lock him into these places any more. Make him understand what I will do to get him out. I can do it. And take me at once where he is.'

'To you, likewise, I say, "Have patience,"' replied Mr. Incledon. 'You will not be denied an interview with him. I am ready to state all I know; but the chaplain is not a power in prisons; when I speak I shall be sneered at as a sentimentalist. If Mr. Harland's were the only case, I could do more. Public opinion is guided by the officials; and the officials have seen this collapse in their charges so frequently that they take it as a matter of course. They can't fancy the system other than it is. Let your husband out on the plea of shattered nerves and brain, and how many more ought not to follow him? Against this you will have to fight, Mrs Harland, as I have had, but unless a new influence can be summoned, you will fight in vain.'

'Surely, five years' penal servitude was never intended to cover unspeakable misery and the loss of reason,' cried Marian, beside herself with helpless indignation.

'The judges don't see it; the public don't hear of it; no one outside the system can measure its depravity. Put the prison on a stage high enough for all England to witness what goes on there, and in a month it would be reformed. I have been a gaol chaplain fifteen years. In that time, from ten to twelve thousand prisoners have passed through my hands every year. The great majority of them come back, once they have been in. Is it astonishing? They go out feeble in mind, with muscles unstrung, not capable of steady exertion, and always the brand of Cain is upon them. How are they to earn a livelihood among decent men? Every sentence, as now carried into execution, tends to be a life-sentence; and, I say, in seven cases out of ten, it becomes so. Your husband may not end his days in prison. I pray for his deliverance. But can you, if he is released, take charge of him, find him the comforts or necessaries of an invalid, and the waiting he will require? Think well over it, dear lady, before you take steps which may break you, yet not advantage him.'

'Let me see him as soon as you can,' was Marian's answer. 'I am bound in the same chain; we must wear it together and wear it out.'

She did see him, days afterwards, passing along corridors, and the clash of keys resounding, until she came between four whitewashed walls, and a cage opened its mouth and they entered. It was the visible emblem of the marriage that held them both prisoners. Silent men paced up and down, watching them. A crude, harsh light filled the room, was thrown back from its awful whiteness, and rested on their heads like an anathema. Marian, the Princess that no weeds could disguise or grief disfigure, sat there speechless, but with an eloquent face and crimson lips. Her silence implied strong emotion. The man, half-crouching a little way off, had on his features a cere cloth—waxen immobility, beneath which the eyes were quenched, lips frozen, a wan and woe-begone, yet vacant air. She thought how quick-glancing a sight it was in old time, never at rest. Now he looked sideways, and trembled, but with a most pitiful attempt to hide his trepidation, as a beast that is often struck. His cropped hair had lost its gloss and become utterly white—the hair of a man of seventy. He could not keep his hands from shaking; they danced a St Vitus' dance upon his knee, and seemed alone, of all his outward man, to have an expression in them. He was small and shrunken compared with the Lucas Harland she had known.

Marian could have fallen upon his neck weeping. She did not say to herself, 'I forgive him'; that was long past; all her thought was how to stir in the remnant of humanity which bent down there, awaiting it knew not what, a sense, a conviction, that she pitied and would rescue him. How to begin? Where was the chord to play upon? What language did he understand?

'Lucas,' she said in a low but tender voice, clasping his fingers, 'you know who it is, don't you?' The hand which lay in hers had no warmth.

He answered with a feeble effort. 'I used to call you my wife,' then lapsed into his shroud, not minding that she was near him.

'Call me so, still,' she said. 'I went away; but you remember, Lucas, I did come back; I asked you to forgive me. You do forgive me.' She must not let the fingers slip, or his wavering consciousness would flicker and go out.

He made no sign of repugnance to her holding them. 'I can't think of things,' he answered, always in the same slow fashion, his words dropping upon the air like pebbles into water. 'You came back? Where did you come back?'

O, it was unendurable! 'Never mind—never mind,' she said. She would have to forgive herself;—the very offence had gone from him.

'Would you let me take you home?' she murmured close to his ear, 'if I persuaded them to shorten your sentence?'

He put a hand to his head. 'You won't worry me, will you, please? Sometimes I think I'm not right in my mind; I try to keep quiet, you know—it's the best way, isn't it? Then I shall not go mad so soon. People do go mad here. One, two, three, four, five; I saw five of us strapped down—mad. It's a place for that.'

'But, Lucas, you will not be worried; everything shall be as you like. Only say you will come back with me—with your Marian.'

He tried, as if studying a hard passage, to follow while she spoke. 'I've not misbehaved. I shall get my certificate of good conduct; months off my sentence. How many?—I ought to be going out next week. But if they don't let me, I shall not complain.' His voice had subsided into a mere whimper, all its strident boldness gone. 'It is no use complaining,' he said, thrusting forward the dull face into hers. 'No use at all. You see I am not complaining. Am I?'

'Not in the least. You are very patient. Tell me, dear, do you feel any ache or sickness? You must

cheer up; when you are out once more, you will soon get strong.'

'There was a house,' he muttered timidly, as to himself, 'a big house, and a dead child in it; and some woman at the door. Don't take me there.'

She remembered the house and the dead child—her own; but the woman, who was it? Perhaps herself—or La Farfalla. 'You shall not be taken there. I have a pretty little house—a long way from that one—a house you will like—flowers and sunshine all about it.' She was thinking of a small cottage near Madame Cornaro's, which, if Harland were set free, she had decided on taking.

'But, when I speak to these great people for you,' said Marian, seeing him so passive, 'is there nothing you charge me to tell them? No message?'

He looked round in a fright. The silent men were always parading up and down. 'I said I never complained. You know I don't. Why should you want to get me into trouble? I am happy; very happy; all most kind—food, sleep, plenty of it. I don't object to anything. Go away; you will get me punished—it is not my fault.'

The quenched eyes had a wet and muddy gleam in them; the fingers were withdrawn. He edged furtively towards the door, in a panic which distracted him between fear of the woman and dread of his gaolers. The cowardice, into which all his other feelings melted, was abject. And this man had ruled as a king in finance, his word irresistible. There is a degree of craven spirit that tempts one to strike; it carries an offence in its boundless suspicion. As that horrible spasm of disgust went through Marian's nerves, she thought she must have died. Not a minute more. She knew what she came to know; her husband was far on the other side of any possible recovery; but he should be delivered from this cage.

With a firm gesture she rose up, took his hands in hers, and drawing the white head to her bosom, kissed him. At the touch, Harland woke—not altogether, but

as a child between its dreams, and clung to her instinctively. 'Marian, don't leave me,' he cried in a half-stifled voice, 'I—I am not happy.' He forgot the silent watchers.

'You shall be yet, Lucas, and I leave you to hasten it,' she answered, holding him as long as she could. 'Try to remember. You shall soon see me again.'

When she had reached the door, a strange odd noise made her turn to the cage where he was standing. But he stood no longer. The phantom in its hideous costume lay in a heap behind those bars.

What next to do she did not know. Mrs Harland the rich, with parks and palaces, and gold mines in the City, was a power; in those days she could have opened prisons, by judicious exercise of influence in the right quarter. Mlle. Jasmin was nobody; where could she find friends? The public were subscribing yet in a desultory way to the support of widows and orphans brought low by the 'General Assurance'; they felt the crime in their pockets; they did not see the criminal grovelling on the floor, a beast, not a man, whom it was vindictive and superfluous to smite where he lay. But the scapegoat that bears on its drooping head the sins of last year makes those of the year to come possible. They punished Harland, then straightway went and did the things for which he was driven to insanity. Commercial honour held him under lock and key; in its balance sheet the cell and the cage at Wormwood Scrubs were no inconsiderable items.

To the beloved physician at Hillside Terrace, Marian poured out her griefs. Miss Raby knew something of the prison system and loathed it. 'With judges, gaolers, cranks, the silent system, and slavery behind closed doors, you neither prevent nor reform,' she said. 'If you want to heal these creatures of misfortune, they are not healed; if to lessen their numbers, you take the way to increase them; and you fail to protect society, though you make an Inferno in the heart of it.'

She proved to be the ally of whom Marian was in

search. A high person, Mr Randall Stafford, who belonged to that pre-established harmony which fits the well-born for places of large emolument, was married to one of her patients. He held an office that gave access to this Inferno, and his wife lent the keys to her doctor. Miss Raby saw Harland, spoke with Mr Incledon, and drew up a medical account of Lucas, which went into particulars with appalling frankness. In all this Marian did not appear. The chaplain added his evidence, and in a quiet, manly way, put in his plea for mercy, now that justice was satisfied. Together they won the assent of Mr Randall Stafford, who, as a permanent official, could, in nine cases out of ten, overcome the 'transient and embarrassed phantoms' —to use a celebrated expression—that passed over the stage as Parliamentary shadows. He made up his mind to release the convict, but, said he, 'You will shut him in with a clang if you discuss the matter in public. Don't let one word be printed. First act, then apologise. That is the secret of successful administration. My chief will be attacked in the House, and called names, but when the bird is flown, they won't try to capture him. It would be monstrous, and we should know perfectly well, besides, how not to do it.'

The order for release was given. Between them, Marian and Miss Raby took the broken man to that little cottage, three or four doors distant from where Madame Cornaro lived, in which he was henceforth to spend his days—few but not so miserable as behind the prison walls. There, in a small room at the back, from the window of which he might have looked into La Farfalla's garden—sat, or reclined, or stood, the shell that had formerly held the spirit, of Lucas Harland. Since his wife's last interview with him he had slipped down many steps. He did not recognise her; and Miss Raby inspired him with a dislike, not forcibly expressed, but cowering, and begging to be forgiven by childish tokens. On the whole he was shockingly passive He ate and drank what was set before him, stayed all day long in the position in which he had been told to put

himself, echoed the last word of every question, and behaved like a machine, wound up by clockwork. Marian had never known a case of this description by sight, or even hearsay; it tried her nerves, and made her doubt whether things had any sense in them at all; but she rebuked the atheism, arguing from her sorrow to the Divine instinct that must have quickened it. She trusted, however faintly, the larger hope.

Sorrow, dedicating itself to daily and hourly service —as of a mother, not a wife. The man was an infant now, without means, without understanding, without will; he had lost all that the most wretched can lose; but love, denied him in the days of his vanity, came, and knelt, and ministered, while he looked on, not knowing it save by a physical sense, the absence of discomfort, and some suspicion low down in his poor mind, that he was not now in prison. The terrible white walls, the shadowed bars, were away. Not able to remember the compassionate woman that bent over him, he liked her to be there. When she went out, he would sometimes cry, after the affecting manner of the blind, on whose cheeks the tears run down without hindrance. A nurse took up her duty while Marian rehearsed and sang in drawing-rooms, or acted minor parts on the stage.

She had never lived so hard. Fortune seemed to have turned quite against her. Even in the nursing she could not ask La Farfalla to share, and much less Zorzi. Neither had seen Lucas brought home. The Italian, meek and devoted, was not unwilling to wait upon her ancient lover; but the boy must not be taken to such a spectacle; and how if a face once well known should break in suddenly upon the invalid's remembrance? He might die under the double stroke of memory and remorse. But it was a heavy burden to play these opposing parts in the sick-room and outside; Marian tasted the bitterness until her food, and sleep, and studies were all soaked in it. She was drinking the wine of self-sacrifice day by day; and now her con-

solation rested on another saying in General Greystoke's volume, 'The world passes, pass thou from it.' How blessed an assurance it was that the end could not be delayed! He, or she—and, more truly, both of them—would soon be gone. There was a disused London churchyard, full of leaning stones, not far from the house. She would walk through it sometimes, at evening or morning, and learn to be patient, seeing what a many were in their quiet graves after all their trouble. Then, that day or the next, she was singing, attitudinising, throwing herself into the graceful pathetic mockeries and make-believes, the grown children's play, that we call art. Eros still dreamt his dream; but Marian Greystoke dreamt with eyes open, and knew the things she acted to be an illusion. Pity and the service of pity were all in all.

No little while the service lasted. Harland, never coming to himself as of old, had his lucid intervals. He answered occasionally, instead of echoing what others said; and he began to consider Marian with a reflective expression in his eyes. But he still appeared uncertain about her. Was she distinct from Letitia or the same? He called her Letitia. As time went on, he alluded to this or that in early days, as if they had known it together; and Marian encouraged him; if he uttered a name, she gave it back, inquired, was full of interest, and so he would talk, but in snatches, breaking the thread to fall into a doze, and by and by wandering to another episode from the far past. It was in this confused fashion that one afternoon, the thunder making him restless which was rumbling among the clouds and darkened their garden, he let fall the name of 'Morosini.' 'Morosini—dead now!' he muttered in his colourless voice.

Marian was startled. 'Yes, Morosini is dead,' she answered, coming close to him where he sat, his eyes fixed on the window. That news had been brought several days previously, by an acquaintance, who had told her of it in the front room which served as a drawing-room; did Lucas hear it through the walls?

You wear this for him,' said the invalid, touching her black dress.

'No, indeed,' she said mournfully. It was the man in front of her for whom she had put on these weeds; but he should never know.

'You ought, Letitia,' said Harland. 'Once you wanted a white dress—wedding-dress. But Morosini—too old. Actor—how could you marry the actor? I would not let you. I remember. You knelt—there,' pointing to his feet. 'You cried and cried. Foolish! Cry now; he is dead. The dead can't marry. How you did cry!'

There was nothing to be got by asking more questions. His mind fell away again, as if the name of Morosini had provoked an electric discharge, and that exhausted, the connection was broken. Marian had never been allowed to pay a visit to Letitia, who, without being disordered in her intellect, remained so feeble that any shock might overthrow health and sense together. She lived in the secret-world, but professed not to see anything except a clear light, under guidance of which the poor mystic wrote many pages, harmless, hopeful and a little extravagant. I have turned them over but could find nothing to repay quotation. From her Marian would not get the story of which Lucas had thrown out hints. But she spoke to La Farfalla. 'Tell me about Signor Morosini. Did Miss Harland think of marrying him?'

'Oh, marry him!' exclaimed Madame Cornaro, 'how not, indeed? She was adoring my old master from the time he first came in England. A true passion! And he, I must not tell a lie, enamoured also. But old—yes, very old, and of money nothing, and not of her religion. The brother would not they should marry. He sends my master away from the Opera, lets him not get engaged in London, not any where. Letitia—I liked her very much—weeps and falls as a dead woman—no use. Then she is ill, a long time. I thought Lucas cruel to let her be so unhappy; and we both very angry. Since then, I hear not of them. Now Morosini dead—ah, the poor man!'

'But Letitia is alive and more to be pitied,' said Marian. This husband of hers, in the day when he was most himself, did not spare others. Yet he must be forgiven. A single glance at him, where he sat enchanted and speechless, was enough. One so forlorn! She would clip him about with this most tender air, forget everything except his weakness, have no purpose but to shield him until he should be taken. The road, however steep, went forward—rude climbing, but on the heights rest and a clear sky.

At one of her drawing-room recitals, Mlle. Jasmin had gained first the ear and then the admiration of a quiet, keen-eyed young man, who watched her acting narrowly, but made no remark upon it. This was that uncommon sort of person, the stage manager that does not play himself, yet is more than a broker making bargains out of the public, the author and the company of which he is the go-between. His head for figures was undoubted; yet Mr Van Espen had ideas as well as a ready reckoner inside his cranium; and the chief of those ideas, he declared in print and conversation, looked to the establishment of an Opera House in London where genuine lyrical drama should be given to audiences worthy of it. In the Shrewsbury Avenue he had taken the lease of a splendid building; christened it 'The Dorians'; and produced works which, in themselves of merit, were enacted as a whole after minute and even exquisite training, not to the greater glory of single stars, masculine or feminine, but on the old Greek lines, almost as a religious service. Mr Van Espen belonged to the younger school, inaugurated by the Elvens; but he had not hitherto brought out any of Gerard's dramas. A critic, scholar and socialist, he never wearied of preaching against the decay of art which, as he maintained, was the inevitable result of catering for the tastes of the individual instead of going direct to the people. But when cynics reminded him that 'the people' delighted in the modern music-hall, his answer was ready. The revolution in art must march side by side with the

revolution in modes of life and economics. He did not think one could run before the other. His business, meanwhile, was the revolution in art. He possessed some fortune, and he was expending it on 'The Dorians,' which seemed likely to create the taste for large and heroic representation, that would by and by draw popular houses from the chosen in every class.

He liked Marian's intense and spontaneous acting; attended in the theatres where she played her minor parts; talked over musical themes with her; and felt a chivalrous devotion to the something brave and still in this woman that bore up against the trouble she could not always hide. An evening came when, her recitation over, she was resting, glad of the quiet, in the house where he had made her acquaintance, among the blooms of the conservatory. Mr Van Espen went up to her. 'I am going to make a bold plunge, Mademoiselle,' he said; 'but your singing to-night must be my apology if I go too far. You know the name of "The Dorians," I think?'

Marian bowed. She was excessively tired. Lucas had spent a day in dull torment, and she wanted to be with him, but could not leave immediately.

'I am the manager who is always, like a tiger, in quest of fresh blood. But how shall I get it? I must have some rare inducement. Now, within the last week, an adventure has offered; and I humbly ask if you will join. Gerard Elven—'

'Yes, what of Gerard Elven?' said Marian, moved but not excited. She could pronounce the name without a tremor. Yet some colour passed from her face.

'Do you know him at all?' asked the manager, quick to see a change in the expression of those he was talking with.

'I knew him once,' replied the lady. It was enough, and Mr Van Espen went on.

'We are not countrymen, though perhaps neighbours; for my family come from Boeremonde, and he is of the Lower Rhine. But I count myself his disciple. I do think him the greatest master of dramatic music the

world has ever seen. By way of rewarding my faith, I suppose, he is allowing me to bring out at "The Dorians" a fresh opera, we must call it—the stupid name will last until we invent a better—but he lays down his conditions. What are they? He asks to choose the company. Quite fair, isn't it?'

'I think so. What is the subject of his play?'

'A most interesting one—Cyprian and Justina. The early Christian legend of the Virgin Martyr and the Magician, told by Calderon, you remember. Shelley has translated one or two of the scenes, but Elven manipulates all stories according to his own vision of them. I want you to be Justina.'

The room swam before Marian. 'I—and see Gerard Elven? Oh, impossible, impossible.' She stood up, and was for ending the discussion there; but Mr Van Espen had a will of his own. 'Do reflect before you say no. I have thought over all the first singers that I could ask; I am sure you are the only one. So sure as to have made up my mind not to accept the play, unless you were in it. The *rôle* is a great one, but so much out of the common—what prima donna will sing of Love's Renunciation, which is its motive? They would rave about Love's Triumph; always do and always will. But Elven has some idea of dethroning the eternal love story. Shall I send you the book? For my part I welcome these new motives with open arms. The modern woman is discovering in life a music graver and less elementary than the school-girl lyric—that French conjugation—'*Je t'aime, tu m'aimes, il m'aime*—which has made rain and fine weather on the stage since I don't know when. Cyprian is grander than Faust; and Marguerite pales and vanishes before the sublime purity of Justina. Say you accept.'

She had another play going on within; almost she was beginning to hum the music audibly of Istar's defiance to the gods, 'Love shall conquer, reign in the heart of the Immortals—passionate Lord;' and she saw the car-born Aphrodite, with doves to her chariot, winging her way towards Paphos and its myrtle thickets.

How had Gerard come to this new Heaven, where another love burned and lightened, and the flame of Aphrodite went down? He must be changed. Was it possible? And had he found, like herself, the human motive, so much higher, deeper, more enduring than love-lyrics? Years—had they brought it to pass?—years of silent, estrangement of suffering perhaps? She looked into the petals of a moss rose that she was holding—how tender and pure! There was, amid the confusion and greyness of things, this flower—a promise, a whisper, from the heart of God. He that made sinful men and women suffered it to spring up beside their path, and a thousand as sweet; surely not to deceive them with idle hopes. Gerard—Gerard Elven—wrote of Love's Renunciation?—was setting it to music in honour of a love more divine? A shower of roses seemed to be falling upon her brows, into her lap; the grey had turned to dazzling sunlight. And passion was away; not a tongue of its fire came to darken this white flame. Wonderful! Who could explain it?

She kept silence in this rapture so long that Van Espen despaired. He felt sure a violent emotion was passing over the face, bent as in ecstasy to the rose that threw a faint blush upwards, smiling back to Marian. What he longed for was that emotion in front of an audience, and the glorious voice. Would she consent? Would she refuse? He waited.

'I will see Mr Elven,' she said, putting the rose to her lips, 'but in my own way, if you please. Say to him that Mlle. Jasmin would like an interview—not at your office, nor with others, but—yes, it will be the better thing—on the stage at "The Dorians." What morning? Fix a morning and an hour. Ah! and he will not speak to you of any former acquaintance between us. He did not know me by this name, a *nom de guerre*. Allow me to introduce myself. I must bargain for that.'

'By all means. How delightful!' cried Van Espen. 'You will be an admirable Justina.' They chose a morning, decided on the hour and parted. During

the interval which followed there was neither sleep nor rest for Marian.

And she had come into the theatre by one of the side doors, made her way along passages dark and lonely at that time of day, entered, as if to act a part, behind, and the great desolate spaces yawned which eyes would fill and the human countenance by and by, an indefinable atmosphere clinging to these decorations, furnishings, disordered seats, and rising with the dust to her throat. So fantastic a world, all carved out of the carver's brain, and yet she had come to live in it.

No other home was there which she could call hers. While Lucas remained an image of himself, needing attendance, but incapable of rewarding it, her little house in the back street was an asylum, a hospital, not the human nest that is warm and sheltered, over which love trills out its song tenderly. This, then, held her hopes and fears. But if only she might act a single piece, not be compelled, as now, to make the acting her own tragedy! She sat down in a great chair with a canopied top and escutcheon in gilt and vellum, which had served for a throne the night before, and, leaning on the massive arm, fell into a thousand thoughts. Behind her, the ropes, pulleys, machinery, made a grotesque confusion. And she said to herself life must then be improvised; it could not be set and learned in lessons, and lived by the card. She knew nothing at all of the scene into which, as a step told her on the boards, Gerard Elven was immediately to enter.

He walked in hastily, gave an enquiring glance around, and caught sight of the actress, Mlle. Jasmin, as he supposed, a woman of fair proportions, draped in black, seated on the royal chair with its gilt and purple trappings, a canopy overshadowing her. The attitude was one of desolation or abandonment, as when a creature, fancying itself alone, lets fall the parade, unbends from the stiffness, that imply an effort. Was it studied? Or simply what it said, the pose of fatigue, brought on by this discouraging emptiness of space,

this artificial gloom, this litter of scenes not in use, and topsyturvydom of things never solid, the lumber room into which actors thrust their worn-out dreams and leave them till they can be patched up again? He thought there was something in the figure at rest which he knew; but what it was he could not tell. And he came forward.

'Mademoiselle Jasmin?' he said, with a question in his voice. She shook all of a sudden at the sound close to her, started up, and clung with one hand to the chair. He, too, was in a taking of unutterable astonishment. 'Marian!' was all he could say at last, 'Marian!'

She had no word in her mouth. She saw him—the same Gerard—his eyes full of light, lips firm, but lines of weariness ploughed into the features, wrinkling the brow as he frowned with an inquiry which concentrated his gaze upon her, and which signified 'How came you here?' They made no show of clasping hands. Their souls were striving to meet, and had forgotten the tricks of the body. But an immense distance seemed to divide them.

'Where is Mademoiselle Jasmin?' he whispered, although that was now not of the slightest moment to him. He must say something.

Marian recovered her voice. 'Don't be angry with me. I—I am Mademoiselle Jasmin.' She came a little towards him on the dais; but he drew back, incredulous, not able to undo the tangled skein of his emotions, guesses, wonderment.

'You are Jasmin? How long have you been on the stage? Does your husband know?'

'My husband knows neither Marian nor Jasmin. His mind is shattered. No, not because of you and me. It was not that. He—you have heard—you know from the newspapers what happened, don't you?'

'Bankruptcy, trial, prison—I know. What else? Is he still in the hands of the law?'

'He is released, and I am doing all I can for him. I took Rudolph's advice; I went back. Tell your brother. But I fear it was not soon enough. Lucas thinks I am

his sister, when he remembers any of the past. We are dependent on what I earn. Now you understand Mademoiselle Jasmin.'

He did not answer—could not, indeed—but kept standing in front of the woman whose spirit floated upwards into a lightsome air above him, the passion-haunted magician. Now he shrank from touching her hand, but as he would have shrunk from a thing enskied and sainted. He felt his heart grow larger; it beat upon his side, throbbing tumultuously.

'You are my Justina,' fell from Gerard's lips in the dead silence. 'I thought I never should see you again. Rudolph would not suffer me to make search after you. He said it was not right—not necessary. His confidence in your coming out of it all as you have done was greater than mine.'

'But haven't you come through as well, Gerard? Mr Van Espen has told me all about your play and its motive—*our* motive. Had he not, I should be somewhere else this morning. Istar was of another world and time; she is dead to us.'

'Rudolph has a large hand in the new drama. He took me, that night, up to his convent, Monte Vergine. I went there, stayed months in the cloister, came out, and went again, made it my cell, my retreat; and we were turning over the Lives of the Saints—the "*Golden Legend*" of Jacobus de Voragine—and lighted upon this. You know I think and philosophize in music; but he is a poet—words come to him as harmonies to me. Between us we composed "*Cyprian and Justina.*" We have written it with our heart, our nerves, our reminiscences, our blood. Yes, how truly old Mephisto murmurs—the villain—"*Blut ist ein ganz besondrer Saft!*"

'And I will play your Justina with heart, and nerves, and all that is best in Marian Greystoke,' said the actress, 'that is, if you can bear with me. For I have continual sorrow here,' striking her breast passionately.

'You regret, you desire?' said Elven, pained, and dreading lest the pure vision he had caught a glimpse of should evanesce into the earthly again. But Marian's

smile—moonlight upon still water—gave him confidence. She sank back into the chair.

'I regret my blindness, which did not allow me to see in marriage a consecration. I might have rescued and won Lucas to a higher life, had I not chosen to judge him without mercy. I, pledged to love my husband—but I made no effort to love him—I despised where I should have served. A false woman! Not because I went away that night; the disloyalty was long before. I looked on as a stranger while he was falling into the pit which the Latimers digged. No wonder he went down. Have I any desires, you ask, Gerard? Yes, to make what reparation I can. It never will be much. My ambition is my penance. I am living the life of an artist, singing for my bread, not making money. I wish the ways of the world could change, and let me work at some useful thing—with my fingers, in a factory, instead of amusing others. I would gladly sing and act for those whom it made happier—but freely, as children do in their games. Yet there is no bread for me except here. And what can I do?'

'Where did you learn these things?' inquired the musician, his eyes sparkling.

'I seem to have heard you say them, or the like of them. You taught me; but suffering has burnt it in. Lucas taught me.'

'Lucas,' cried Elven, scornfully.

'Yes, Lucas,' answered the pale woman. 'You have not seen him as he is now. Paralysed, a machine that must be set in motion or it will not move. And why? Somehow I feel this would have come about, prison or no prison—perhaps all the sooner if his great speculations had succeeded. I call to mind his little ways, loss of memory, uncertain temper—his long silences, the sleepless nights, the eagerness to be always going on. He never enjoyed or rested in the things he was buying and selling. He didn't really live—he slaved and slaved; all for what? Now, a friend assures me, I could make large sums, if I turned my acting to a

speculation! I, after seeing Lucas Harland, the worst of the victims he has ruined! No—whereas I was blind, now I see.'

'You see that the commercial idea, allowed to reign, is an insanity!' exclaimed Elven. 'Is the destruction of art, and reduces life to a monomania as vulgar as imbecile. Well done, Marian, the lesson is learnt. You are my Justina.'

CHAPTER XXIX

ON SUCH A NIGHT

'THE DORIANS' offered a wonderful show—the 'house' seemed likely almost to eclipse the stage, with its sparklings, soft radiances of dress and ornaments, vivid human by-play, the five hundred or a thousand little scenes, breaking into view one moment, out of sight the next, with actors and actresses cunningly original, absorbed, jealous, amusing, and much of this carrying a distinction, beneath which the eternal instincts must bear themselves gracefully. It was a rare event, 'the captain jewel in the carcanet,' under whose ray Gerard Elven shone, and was to shine. The new lyrical drama had been sketched, argued over, tossed about like a ball by critics in all the arts it challenged, a fine matter for debate, with cross questions and epithets of high explosive power flung into the air—advance, decadence, a palinode, the drivel of one now certainly brainstruck, a triumphant prelude to the century at the doors, new Christian, old Pagan a little varnished—but the conclusion, as Mr Van Espen saw to-night, was 'The Dorians' crowded, expectation foaming at the mouth. '*Cyprian and Justina*' would not fail for want of hearers and spectators.

A modern theatre, roomy, not garish, cool with electric light, a sense of freedom and security in its appointments; behind, in the workshop of mechanical genius, the gnome, Conrad Henle, had done his share. 'You must be, anyhow, as perfect as a small German stage,' he said, with native bluntness. 'But London is not Munich, man tells me. Excuses. We will do better

than Munich. He smuggled in some foreign labour; but Van Espen, having the Dutch elements of light and colour in his blood, gave a willing consent. The rehearsals, too, had gone upon the outlandish principle—Greek or French, was it?—of training the whole company to understand, to live in every part of the play, and actually to take it in as a whole. Marian felt the hand of Gerard Elven shaping this clay to marble forms that, on the night itself, would kindle and become plastic. Though her trouble at home gnawed from hour to hour, and sadness descended upon her as an opium-cloud,—thick darkness which cannot be pierced,—on the mournful background emerged this dream, the sun shining through it, and all the moving figures real, with the opalescence of a vision to glorify them. She was happy, though never quite calm, during the rehearsals. To Gerard she spoke very seldom. They had no need of speech.

In the house, had she known it, some of her former friends were sitting expectant. They did not know Mlle. Jasmin save by repute. Her name gave shelter; and the stories springing up like weeds, no grain of fact in them, shaded Mrs Harland as the little child in Hans Andersen is shaded and lost among the tall blades of grass. Charlie Latimer, having struck at his man through the musician and brought him down, felt no farther interest in this kind of drama. He had not desired to see Marian after the interview which parted them, sending Lucas to the dock. Were anyone to assure him she was on the other side of the street, he would have marched steadily on, with eyes before him, resolved to keep the book closed in which that tale was written. His boy, another sort of Eros, broke the rival Cupid's bow and arrows for a plaything. And so Charlie was not there.

But Pauline was, in ivory silk, diamonds, and hair tinted golden by bismuth—as serpentine as ever, though more placid. She had not dimmed her blue eyes with a tear on Mrs Harland's account, nor spent five minutes in thinking what had become of her, from the day when

Lucas was sentenced. The God of this world had been generous to Pauline. Riches, and an adorable baby, and a husband who was great in finance, nor unkind at home, though he did indulge some temper, but—husbands were husbands. She had turned the Pathfinders adrift. Their schemes never much took her fancy, and they had long ceased to be amusing. None of them were with her to-night.

Her *cavalier' servente* was, however, still the same, now domesticated in Vivian Lodge, and sometimes not more lively than a china dog from Mortlock's—perhaps because he had come into a tolerable fortune, and his epigrams were getting blunted on a golden anvil. Mr Browne the elder was dead. Ancient, disregarded stocks, in a Company the affairs of which were ages in liquidation, had produced, when Mr Browne lay on his deathbed, several tens of thousands. They were left to his son, but on a stipulation that he should revert to his family name, his parent observing that it was 'more honest like,' and that 'turncoats never prospered.' With many a stout sigh, the heir to these thousands bethought him what could be done. He studied the Peerage, consulted men of law, and when he was assured that the step which he had resolved upon would not imperil the value of the shares, gave himself out as Mr Browne Vandyke Browne. This stratified or geological designation met the claims of past, present and future. It did no harm to anybody. And the only thing that suffered was that 'genuine Brownesque,' as Letitia called it, the manufacture of which younger men now took up, while Vandyke lamented that you could not patent a style as luckier men patented blacking or harness polish.

And many more looked out from the boxes and dress-circle—shadows that have trooped along with us, not unimportant but unnamed. To Marian they were simply a dark presence into which the drama must somehow enter, making it live and feel. She knew the past would be there—it made her nerves tingle, and she threw herself yet more decisively into the play, that she

might escape it. They, too, perchance, would be enraptured and not recognise her. She was acting a part they had never seen. Acting with others, not starring it alone. Oh, the comfort, the large inspiration that such acting gave! It was all music now, an exquisite, pervading harmony, with this effect dawning out of it, an Alpine aurora, that rose behind the mountain-peaks, flushed them and all their pines and glaciers with hues most delicate, and spread and spread, until the world stood out, beautiful, a vision of the mind, a revelation from the unknown, tender with shimmering hope.

The Forest wild, crags and ancient trees, with lawns far-drawn in the distance; a silvery light, tinged with green where it falls through the thick leafage; and undertones of a murmuring, cooing, sleeping, or half-watching life everywhere—bird and beast hidden, while the day is over them all. A curiously pensive music, sparks flying up into the sky as attracted by vapours floating there; but, in the bass, thoughts more melancholy, the trouble of a spirit which cannot be at peace, and, at intervals, a question seems to be asked, as if in a terrific darkness, where no answer will come. The magician, Cyprian, enters reading, but his eyes are often on the ground. He is a waste, haggard man, the student's pallium about his shoulders, comely, no doubt, ere he took up the meditations that have made him lean. His disciples, away in the glade, observe him silently, and, as the forest voices die, come forward, entreat him to spend the next hours in Antioch, where the image and temple of the Father of Gods, Jupiter, shall be dedicated, with sacrifices, pomps of singing men and singing women, and immeasurable joy.

Cyprian bursts into a storm of philosophic passion. Has he taught them to such effect—he, the patient explorer into mysteries, that they can wish to approach the shrine of Jupiter, following a vile multitude? There is no Jupiter: 'This burning sky, these waters on the edge of it, this flowering wilderness, out of which new lives spring up incessantly, this, all this is Jupiter—and there can be no other god.' He

has fled from the city to avoid their festival. But the youths add in their *naïve* or sheepish way: 'And the temple of Venus, fronting that of Jove—to-day it is consecrated. Wilt thou, Master, spurn at her golden gifts?' He rebukes them more mildly, in a chant which breathes of spring once dear to him; but far be the madness from one that has spent austere days in the pursuit of a better magic. Let them go; he has done with teaching: Venus and Jove shall take them in hand now. They profess penitence; but their eyes are up the glade along which they came and away towards the city. Their quondam master almost drives them from him, and moves sadly into the wood, catching low notes that elude his ear again, and ever the question murmurs out of darkness—beneath his steps.

He sits down, at the foot of an enormous oak, ponders, and gives expression to the grief none else comprehends. Books are vain; his fellows cannot teach him, for what do they know? he is an adept in arts revered or condemned as dangerous; and he can do marvellous things by means of them; but he has not attained knowledge. Two secrets are hidden from his eyes—Shall the grave give up its dead? Is there One watching, listening, in the unseen? Oh, if it were given him to find out! The darkness echoes his question, hints at his misery; all the poignant doubt of generations has fallen with a weight of lead upon the audience that hear this chant, dolorous and sincere, of the man that has suddenly become their mouthpiece. Will not the beautiful landscape itself make reply?

It murmurs something, but to Cyprian in a trouble so intense, its voices are a provocation. He bids it not vex him with phantasies. Here amid the solitudes he will stay until hunger, thirst, nakedness, have consumed him. And in a stillness of all the instruments, he turns to the sea. Swelling, lifting up a tumult of waves, when he has gazed upon it, as though his yeasty enchantments worked and threw it into storm, it rises, calls down fire from heaven, is wrapt in dun smoke; the note of questioning roars through its torment; the waters utter

their mighty sound, and on the crest of the billows a great ship, helpless, outcast, drives to destruction. There is a fearful cry of all on board, 'Lost, we are lost!' But while the ship goes down, prow foremost, a dark figure leaping out of the shrouds is carried through the air, and alights, with majestic calmness and gravity, where Cyprian stands astonished. With the stranger's flight, chords most weird, obscure, and heavy, terror-striking, fill the scene.

'Who art thou? And who the men that have perished?' asks the magician, moved to equal wonder and pity. To which the terror from the sea makes reply, 'Mortal men, as thou art, with whom I had sailed. I know thy love and thy wisdom, which are one. But thou art still mortal; death swallows thy love and thy wisdom.'

'Are there Immortals? Not men, thou sayest; and I say, not the gods either. Nothing beneath the moon but flows, changes, wanders into new forms. Above it, what is there?—vacancy; such, at least, is all my instruments have ever found. But thy name?'

The newcomer laughs, and a hollow cynical murmur multiplies his laugh, 'Canst thou put bounds to Nature? Sweep and search with keen glasses; mayhap reality is too fine for them; because thou passest by, shall the hidden things cease to be? Among men I have had names, foolish or not mine own; in the regions where thou dwellest call me Hilel, Ben Schachar—Son of the Morning.' And he boasts of the quiet that has come over the sky. 'Canst thou fill the heavens with clouds, and scatter them? Vain pedant, questioning in thy muddy flesh of things too high for thee. Go, take thy part in the Festival. Thou hast nothing more than the rest but words without meaning, and instruments that blind thee to the Immortals.'

All through a fierce, persistent staccato, discords tearing the heart, accompany the mocking and sarcasm of Hilel Ben Schachar. Now he waves a hand towards the city; there is an amazing change of key; in the low ranges of a cloud-laden summer sky, drenched with

sunshine, appears Antioch with wide marble terraces, the temples facing one another, crowds in the interspaces, and before the altars two long processions are moving slowly on, youths chanting, maidens answering, an epithalamium, or marriage-song, in which all the conquests of Venus, and all the amours of Jove, seem to unite their fascinations. The stage is not simple Greek; it has an Oriental warmth, a touch of the barbaric, as from old time, when death mingled with strange wedding rites. 'I love the rose that is steeped in blood,' mutters Hilel in an aside. But Cyprian argues, soliloquising, 'If we are mortal, why not this love? What am I the better for my knowledge?' He has squandered his only treasure. Hilel, as if the reminiscence haunted him, sings in an undertone, 'Lost, we are lost,' as the mariners did when the sea swallowed them.

'Yet, I will not yield myself to these blind powers,' at length cries Cyprian. 'Tell me of thy Immortals.' At that word, while the city and its processions fade into a white sky, the ground sends up an invisible exhalation, strains not of a marriage-song, but something grave and solemn. Hilel, deep in thought, starts violently, but recovering, bids Cyprian follow. They enter between hanging rocks, go down into the dark, the strains approaching, and ever more sweet in their cadence, until glimmering lights disclose a chapel hewn out of the hard stone, with an altar in a recess; frescoes, leafy like the vine, upon plastered walls; and men and women standing, these on one side, those on the other, so that their faces are seen as in a picture. A venerable man, behind the altar, his countenance turned to the East, is holding a dialogue with this company, but Cyprian cannot make sense of what is chanted. Their entrance passes unobserved.

'Whom do these worship? For they worship someone,' he asks of his guide. Hilel replies, 'They worship the new god—rival, and it may be, conqueror of Jove, who will lay waste Olympus—the Nazarene. See Him there, painted as Orpheus, charming the world.'

'Has he charmed thee, O Hilel Ben Schachar?' A question at which earthquake and lightning shake even that subterranean place. 'Not me—though His power is Love. Not me—for I serve none—not even Love.' It is a confession, piercing, utterly forlorn. 'Think not I can love; but thou canst. Behold!'

He shows him with a gesture one who is leading the maidens' song—Justina, erect, with eyes bent on the altar, praying the prayer of innocence. And it is enough for the magician to see her, to listen until the priest takes up his part, and begins a long invocation. Hilel draws his companion towards the entrance between the rocks. 'Let us go; these prayers are hateful to me. But, if I could love, Justina would be dear to me. Come, the lifting up of Christian hands I cannot endure. They sing to their Christ as God. It was my place—my place; I am the bright and morning star.' He vanishes to a music of revolt and despair.

Cyprian asks himself no more questions about the Immortals. But while he repeats, in a fresh soliloquy, some of the hymn, though not understanding it, which Justina has been singing, he hears the clash of swords. Under great massive branches two young men are engaged in combat, Florus and Lelius. They are known to Cyprian, who bids them put up their weapons and explain their quarrel. It is for the hand of Justina; but lunatic as love can make it; for, says Lelius, in answer to his wise friend's reproaches, Justina is a Christian, under the keeping of her uncle, the priest Lysander, and the rumour runs that she will even take the vow of virginity which many Christian maidens take. 'In any case she will not espouse a murderer,' concludes the wizard; 'let me see this wonderful maid. Can I waylay her as she returns through the forest?'

But his tempter, Hilel, provides for their meeting. The Christian girl approaches; she has observed one at the celebration in the catacomb who seemed to her distraught, and fled hastily when the service was at its most sacred moment. Lysander, also anxious, bids her see if one of the brethren, possessed of some evil spirit, and in need of

succour, is wandering in the wood. She encounters Cyprian. The exchange of words and feelings between them is singularly pathetic,—he so perplexed and downcast, beginning to experience a passion he never knew; and the virgin, frank and modest, taking him to be some one of their own in deep trouble, and reminding him of the power to soothe and save that is in their faith. While she pities Cyprian, he loves her.

The house was very still during this dialogue, to which the orchestra gave a magnificent prophetic interpretation, as of the wild wood conversant with secrets hidden from man and maid. Throughout, from time to time, a point of tender irony added to the charm. It was Sophoclean, but the Christian sweetness went beyond any Greek poet. 'How entrancing!' said even the unimpressionable Pauline. 'I can't remember anything quite of this colour,' answered Vandyke. 'If these are *autos*—acts of faith—according to Calderon, it is a pity we have not some in English.'

The German simplicity and inwardness of the language, though not appreciable to many, did, in truth, tell on the dialogue and the music, as appealing through eye and ear to the heart. A deep wave, almost of pity for both the actors in this new dialogue, passed over the house, when Cyprian, rapt out of himself by the very qualities that should have subdued his passion, began to plead, to entreat, to threaten, as a lover; and the maiden to reply, stricken with wonder, brave but yet moved, and at last, though turning to flee from the possessed man, in a trouble too strong for her. She was out of his reach; but he went crying through the forest, jealous of the God whom she served, crying that he must win this love, whatever it cost, nay, though it cost himself. 'Where art thou, Hilel, Son of the Morning?' was his incantation, repeated from the wild deeps, thrown to him out of an ocean, fiercely agitated. 'I never left thee,' came as a response from the apparition, grown immense at his side, 'This is the only way of wisdom for mortals; but thou shalt win the secret knowledge that comes of breaking His law. As I broke

it.' And the fallen spirit now declaring himself to be the Lucifer whom Christians dread, exults in a sort of battle-song, to which unseen choirs give resonance, celebrating the triumphs in man's enlarging course that anarchy has brought—the freedom which runs riot through all forms of beauty, ransacks the world, makes a man king over multitudes, dares the abyss, and plucks out of it trophies, terrible to look upon, but alive, palpitating, snatched from the jaws of chaos.

There were some in the theatre who, when this victorious Ode came pealing in thunder about them, clapped their hands frantically. They knew whom they adored. But the wiser held their peace. And soon, the great epinikion was followed by a wail of sadness, 'Something is gone for ever from me; I know not what. If thou hadst it, Cyprian, I would be thy bond-slave; but since it is neither in thy grasp nor mine, pledge me thyself—as the price of Justina. Without me, she cannot be tempted or won over from the service of the new god —the Nazarene.' A sarcastic smile blisters the lips of the magician, who has forgotten all his learning, but keeps the transcendent disdain on which it was founded. 'Take what thou canst of me—spirit or dust. I have the better bargain—Justina.'

The Act which followed upon this, without a break or interval, kept closer to the Spanish drama, handled thus far as material to be dealt with freely. Indeed, as Elven observed, in this portion of the play, Calderon, though he might bear a certain heightening when rendered musically, was unsurpassable, and nothing in Goethe's '*Faust*' came near him. Justina is praying in her room, at sundown. Hilel, now declared to be Lucifer, the proud rebellious angel, king over all the sons of pride, calls up from darkness 'the spirits of voluptuous death;' misrule shall enter in, 'birds and flowers and leaves and all things move to love—only to love.' She is on her knees, devout and absorbed, while the chamber is transformed to an evening Paradise full of soft airs, and first one voice and then another takes up the motive, wooing and delightful, with a faint, hardly breathed sus-

picion wafted by the orchestra, of the death there is in it. The tremendous sceptical questioning sleeps, or is heard in an unfinished reminiscence. Melancholy thoughts, flattering and sweet, melt away Justina's prayers from her lips; the heart betrays the senses into moods which seem unhallowed; she wanders through the lovely Eden, sings back to the nightingale, who 'ever tells the same soft tale of passion and of constancy;' doubting and afraid, she whispers to herself of another meaning in the vine than she had construed when she saw its frescoed branches, down in the dark chapel, and is all but vanquished by the restless sunflower, that fades momently as the sun disappears into ocean. What is the power she can hardly strive against? A marvellous blending of voices and instruments, soft as falling snow, but coloured to a thousand tints, passing into one another, gives back the answer she dreads, 'Love is the power! Love.' And then, as in mere defence, she reflects to herself, 'Whom have I ever loved?' The name of Cyprian glides from her lips. 'I pity him,' she says, in her growing trouble. But the enchanted garden will not echo her word pity. 'Love, love, love,' it trills and murmurs, laughs and utters coaxingly, intensifies with a saucy assurance. Justina fears lest he should have perished in the wood, all by her doing. Shall she seek him there? Her foot is on the threshold, when she turns and perceives Lucifer inside the locked door.

Is he a monstrous shadow, formed by her madness out of the air? He tells her, 'I am thy thought called up from eternity. Thy thought! Now will I be thy deed, and bear thee to Cyprian, whom thou lovest.' In his dark features, and the notes render it also which he sings, there is a strange mingling of regret and admiration. He could almost desire that the maiden should not fall. 'That which I seek in vain, thou hast it,' he lets drop into a golden gulf of harmony, where the regret vanishes. But Justina, at first with a visible effort, gaining courage by degrees and controlling herself, answers, 'My deed must ever be my own; the agony of passion may sweep over me; it cannot make me ship-

wreck. Imagination beguiles, and thou art a tempter; the will is firm.' He has sophistry at command, 'Imagination is half the act; sin is incurred, the pleasure remains.' And his demoniac chorus falls into its melody, 'Love, always Love.' She prays silently; answers with victorious reasoning, 'Thought is not in my power; but action is.' He cannot force her will. When the Tempter, lifting his hands, endeavours that compulsion, Justina remains immovable. She calls upon the Name. And, shrinking but spitting out venom, he declares that she shall be made to yield. In the middle of her brave defiance, he is gone. Lysander, the priest, comes in; they forebode some great peril, and pray it may not light upon them. But the peril has come. Before they can end their prayer, a crowd of Pagans fill the house with clamour—votaries of the Gods, of Jove and Venus, wearing chaplets of flowers in Bacchanal fashion, chanting staves of their epithalamium, and calling down death on the Christians. Lysander and Justina are led away to prison.

And in prison—a keep under ground, hardly lighted, the stone walls dripping with wet, Justina, chained to a column, kneels and pours out her thanks to the Good Shepherd—the music of the Divine Orpheus has tamed her heart, that was ready to rebel, because she had not known affliction. She knows it now, it is the Saviour she has sought, and her voice is most affecting while she dedicates herself henceforward to Him alone. A vow of martyrdom, whatever befalls her. The cadences here, fervent but passionless, like a light from which all colour has been sifted out, remind us of the hymn we heard in the forest sanctuary and of the religious chanting. There is a grave undertone of sorrow, but the night is past with its darkness, the prison has become a shrine. Such, it would appear, the two figures know or feel it to be that rise up through the gloom; Cyprian is visible, and his first words betray an exceeding anguish, but the other phantom mocks at him to conquer his own cowardice.

Cyprian has committed the great crime. He has denounced Justina to the heathen magistrate, and now, in the foul dungeon, driven by his master, he comes to offer liberty as the reward of her undoing. But she is more merciful to him than he knows or can believe. 'For thy sake, Cyprian, I would not do this thing; thou hast a noble nature; He calls thee, that Divine Orpheus, who can touch every heart. Be thou a Christian, and thou shalt know Him.' The choric voices whisper love in their deluding way, but now they recede, and Cyprian hears the sacred chant which puts them to flight.

'Are any in prison with thee, Justina?' he inquires, peering around. 'He hath given His angels charge over thee,' she sings as to enlighten him; but he is persuaded they are earthly messengers. 'If I see them, I shall know,' is his stubborn sentence. The figure behind him laughs. 'Thou shalt see them ere I go to my Lord,' the maiden promises, challenging that laugh with a bolder word. 'How soon, then?' sneers Lucifer. 'To-morrow they will take me to sacrifice at the altar of their demon, whom they call Jupiter. Cyprian, meet me there.' He makes an attempt to lay hands upon her, but is smitten to the ground. A halo glimmers above in the arched roof and, descending softly, encircles the martyr's brow with gems of incandescent splendour. In a radiance, from which Lucifer himself veils his eyes, the man is beheld fleeing away through the portal. 'To-morrow—what will to-morrow bring?' is all he can utter, while the glory smites him and drives him forth.

To-morrow—and the temples of Jove and Venus emerge on their marble terraces. An altar, midway between them, does homage to both. Overhead the sky is a sea of burning glass. The public place, thronged with multitudes in white sacrificial garments, echoes from end to end with confused murmurs of joy and feasting. On the horizon are seen paths leading into the forest. Groups of dancing girls move hither and thither, lost in the crowd, and threading their way out

again, an endless living garland. The priests enter, to a Phrygian clash of cymbals and the beating of drums, carrying on their shoulders the images of god and goddess, while the sun is overshadowed without warning by a huge cloud, its outlines taking the shape of some enormous and formidable creature. It is an evil omen. The statues are set hastily on high; shouting multitudes demand the Christians that have sent their malison upon the progress of the gods; and Justina comes between her gaolers, with wrists bound, in a robe of pure white, her hair falling loose upon it. Lysander follows, in the philosopher's pallium. And not far off is another, in the same grave attire, staggering as he walks, whom the multitude recognise with looks of astonishment, asking themselves if the Stoic Cyprian has turned dissolute. He overhears the gibe, and answers bitterly, 'If I am full of the god, think me not a Bacchanal. I come to offer incense at the shrine of your mistress, Antiochenes.' Justina regards him sorrowfully. 'Thou shalt know to-day, even to-day, Cyprian,' she tells him in her passing. Henceforward he looks only at the maiden in the stainless robe.

The magistrate, in curule chair, is seated, his purple garment about him, lictors bearing bundles of rods, with the axe between them, a little behind. Roman soldiers, in helmets and armour of bronze, their standards floating—almost medieval in their quaint magnificence—keep guard, indifferent to the antics of the Easterns round about them, who like, as in the ancient days of Melkarth, to season their festivals with blood. There is a fine austerity in these legionaries which the martial music that greets their officers, as they take up their position, expresses by its restraint and large, clear movement. But the cymbals and flutes and drums break in, savagely muttering, wailing with primeval preterhuman cries; the grave Jupiter and Venus of the Myrtle Grove are but masks, behind which are lurking other less Hellenic deities—Baal, the Lord of Fire: Cybele, the Mad Mother of Hysteria. To these shall

sacrifice be done, such as their red throats are gaping for.

Cyprian has thrust himself in where he may stand near the magistrate and see all. The trial begins, 'Burn incense, thou Justina, to the high gods. Worship Cæsar's Fortune.' Her answer, a lofty rhythm in the orchestra bearing it up, is to declare, 'I am a Christian!' and being questioned what this means, the Virgin Martyr rises into a theme of most impassioned yet sublime eloquence, reciting an ancient creed in which the attributes of the Supreme are set forth and the lovingkindness of His Son. Her triumphant declamation calls up portents and signs which fill the multitude with terror. The temples rock to their base; the statues of the gods crumble and fall shattered on the pavement; fire leaps up from the altar and dies suddenly; a red flame penetrates to the adyta or sacred recesses where no mortal enters, and lays bare the sanctuary, stripped of its veils. The instruments give out lugubrious and menacing tones, in the midst of which a fearful clamour is heard, 'Let us go hence,' with the sound of a troop departing. Cyprian is appalled, almost persuaded. But the confusion ceases; and 'who has taught her such wizardry?' inquires the judge. Lysander is dragged forward, bidden to take the censer and make an offering to the wrathful gods. 'I sacrifice to the Light of Light,' is all he will answer; and the headsman smites him on the neck. He falls; Justina, dipping a napkin in his blood, gives it to one of the soldiers, himself a Christian, who takes and kisses it reverently.

Then she is stretched upon the rack, torches are applied to her side, but she looks transfigured, and, in brief anthems, her voice is heard, praising Him that strengthens her. The torches give out a fragrance of ineffable sweetness; it is not fire but roses that breathe around; and the rack is a pleasant couch to limbs long aching. 'I see the Heavens open above me,' she sings, 'the Great White Throne and One sitting thereon, who beckons me to ascend. Come hither, Cyprian, lover

of wisdom, now shalt thou know, as I have promised thee.'

At her word he rushes forward ; she has broken her bonds, and is standing erect on the bed of torment ; but her feet scarcely touch it, and like a bird she soars up, that marriage song of the Lamb upon her lips. The magician listens in a dream. 'Let me follow, follow thee, Justina, Virgin of Christ,—ascend whither thou goest!' he cries, 'I believe as thou dost ; let me follow.'

She points to the headsman with his sword on which the blood is red,—'That way thou must follow ; fear not,'—and her smile sinks him to his knees. Afar, on the sea-line, another portent is visible,—a mighty ship, its decks alive with strange saturnine figures lamenting, a thunder-cloud in the sky, and forked lightning out of it every moment. Justina goes up and up, her garments waving, white against the sun. But Cyprian has overturned the altar, he is in the arms of death. Him, too, the sword smites, and he falls prone, stretching a hand to the Virgin-Martyr aloft now in clouds of glory. While the golden gates turn on their hinges, displaying hosts of angels with emblems, these too, of martyrdom, and the rainbow glistens about the semblance of a throne, away in the distance sinks that dark ship, and all its crew. But the orchestra, in a lovely and majestic Epilogue takes us to the very heart of the mystery, combining, resolving, etherealising the motives we have heard, weaving them into a chant of heroic love, faith, ecstasy, until the Good has overcome,—and Evil, vanquished by excess of light, melts and is seen no more.

The house, full to overflowing, subdued, radiant with a splendour which seemed to touch and purify all faces, became one voice, one soul,—Cyprian, the convert of Justina. But she, as on another night,—how like and unlike this!—was in her room, and Gerard Elven was with her. They could not speak ; it was too much. They had lived through the palpitating experience of those

hours. A messenger knocked, then a second. Mr Van Espen begged the composer and Mlle. Jasmin to appear, though but for an instant, at the stage supper. No, they were both saying: it could not be. A third messenger. Mlle. Jasmin was wanted,—a lad in a conveyance at the door had sent in this note. She tore it open. La Farfalla! And the hurried scrawl, 'Come at once. Lucas will not live through the night. Zorzi is waiting.'

CHAPTER XXX

THE GREAT SILENCE

THEY drove through the London streets, under flickering lamps,—Marian, just as the message had found her, with a cloak about her white dress; Elven opposite, silent, and Zorzi, in a trance of astonishment, holding the lady's hand. He had never seen her in a stage costume.

La Farfalla opened the door. 'Thank God, you are come. Nurse says he is sensible. He will know you. I have not gone in. I feared it.'

'Let Zorzi come with me,' whispered Marian. 'You stay by the door, Gerard. Won't you be there, as a help to us?'

Gerard went in along the narrow passage; but stayed, like Madame Cornaro, outside the room. It was lit by a shaded lamp. Sitting propped up on the pillows, Lucas, eager and yet less terrible in this feverish trouble than he had been during the cold enchantment of the earlier time, fixed his bright eyes upon the woman that approached his bedside. Her white garments amazed him.

'Why have you put on your wedding dress?' he enquired; 'is it because I die to-night? I have not been a good husband to you, I know.'

'Hush, hush,' said his wife, stroking the damp forehead, 'I was acting in a play. I came as soon as I could.' He pulled the hand down to his lips and kissed it.

'Whose play?' he said in a quiet whisper. She told

him, 'Gerard Elven's.' At which he brightened, and looking round, 'Where is Gerard? Don't I hear some people outside? Tell him, tell him to come in.'

The door opened, and Elven took a step forward into the room, followed by Giulia.

'I wish the shade was off the lamp,' said Lucas to Marian, pleading but confident, with a childlike tenderness that sent the tears into her eyes. 'I want to see Gerard.'

When the shade was removed, there came out, distinct in the hard ray of the lamplight, a boy's face and his trembling young figure, close to the table.

'For God's sake, Marian, who is that?' asked the dying man.

'Come, Zorzi,' answered his wife, leading the child up to the bed. 'Lucas, you remember Giulia Cornaro,—you remember La Farfalla?'

'I do,' he said, never turning his eyes from Zorzi.

'This is her child,—and yours. Yours,—do you understand?'

He grasped the lad's warm fingers in his own, and kept a still gaze upon him. Zorzi was frightened; with eyes like his mother's, large and dark blue, he gave back the dying stare; but he could not open his lips to speak or even sob. He did not realise that the spectral figure sitting up there had anything to do with him,—much less that it was his father. But Harland, in that steadfast contemplation, drank down the sorrow of years. 'Ah,' he murmured at length, and his throat seemed to swell with emotion. 'That is what I have lost.'

Zorzi was crying now. La Farfalla slipped in, and put her arm round his neck. But Harland either saw nothing or did not recognise the faded woman. He appeared to be thinking deeply.

'When I am dead, you will forgive me, Marian. Yes,—there is much to forgive. And you will be a free woman. We used to laugh about the free woman, usedn't we? But never mind. Elven, I don't see you; here, come and stand here.'

They were close together now. 'We three have

been happy,—miserable,—but for me the day is over. It will—' he said with a last effort,—' it will dawn somewhere, I hope. If I lived, I should be a different man; but to-night I die. Gerard,—take care of Marian.'

He joined their hands, gave one glance at Zorzi, and was gone.

THE END

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